University of Alberta

Witches, Bitches and Moms: a search for empowering women's subjectivity in the works of Canadian and Lithuanian women writers

by

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Canada

Dedication

To the family

Abstract

Situating women's literature in the contexts of globalization, the adoption of capitalism, and the appeal of democracy, this analysis navigates the distinct pressures and difficulties of female subjectivity formation in Eastern Europe in relation to female identity formation in Canada. Focusing on fictional women's attempts to construct a fluid sense of self, my thesis provides a comparative analysis of Lithuanian and Canadian women's writing between the 1970s and the 1990s, in terms of self-formation in relation to mothering experiences, the interaction between language and perception of the female body, as well as constructing the feminine self in the context of patriarchal globalization.

The first chapter traces the development of subjectivity theories, examining how the notion of self transforms from the classical view of pre-destined subjectivity into the notion of a transformable rational self. Connecting the philosophies of marginal self, this chapter critically examines a historical development of feminist subjectivity theories. Building on Kristeva, Butler and Deleuze, this chapter sets the concept of *sujet en procès*, a fluid sense of subjectivity which is used throughout the following study.

Examining the complexities of feminist theorizations of maternal experiences, the second chapter focuses on the comparative analysis of Gabrielle Roy' *La route d'Altamont,* Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women,* as well as

the Lithuanian Vanda Juknaitė's *Šermenys* (*The Wake*) and Ugnė Barauskaitė's *Dešimt* (*Ten*). The study of these works traces the constraints of spiritual, medical and intellectual discourses surrounding femininity, demonstrating the lack of a positive model of maternal subjectivity. Drawing heavily on the feminist criticism of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, the third chapter examines how Jurga Ivanauskaitė's *Ragana ir lietus* (*The Witch and the Rain*) and Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* employ a feminine language in the writing of the female body, as well as the overall significance of the corporeal language in the process of subjectivity creation. With this analysis, I demonstrate how the binary paradigms of feminist theories fail to provide women with possibilities of constructing a positive sense of self.

Finally, comparing Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* and Jurga Ivanauskaitė's *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*), the fourth chapter, demonstrates how women's subjectivities are trapped by the patriarchal colonizer within the globalized and arguably democratic world.

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Introduction:

Women's subjectivities in contemporary democratic patriarchies

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.
>
> (Fukuyama 4)[1]

> Democracy cannot have its basis in any form of power, even if shared, other than one in which men and women coexist as sovereign beings: a woman *or* a man, capable of sharing a right of this sort to exist in a community made up of women *and* men.
>
> (Irigaray 2001: 39)

Perhaps we have reached a *telos* towards which mankind has been moving, a movement which may allow for womankind to voice herself, for in theory and art,

---

[1] From "The end of history? " in *The National Interest 16* (Summer): 3-18.

more and more women are writing about themselves. However universal democracy may have become[2] though, the literary voices of women are not uniform; while there are fascinating similarities between various democratic movements and the writing of women, there are also significant variations. Democracy is defined by this axiological contradiction: an equal community of distinct individuals. When women write upon a world stage which values individual voices, the cross-cultural management of simultaneously clarifying the dynamics of this community of women writers and nuancing differences becomes important. While clarification is important even within a western community of writers, such as Canadian authors, such clarfication becomes especially crucial for those emerging literatures, such as Lithuanian women's writing, which has not yet or are only just being discovered by the international community of scholars. The democratic community of international scholarship allows for feminist theory to reach Lithuania, but this movement of ideas also risks overwhelming or disallowing the development of a culturally specific, yet globally attentive, theory of a local literature.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, studies of feminine identities have become an important and fashionable field; correspondingly, fictional works about womanhood by women writers have amplified. This increased participation in artistic dialogues of identity, local, national, and international, by women theorists and authors is connected to wider philosophical and socio-political changes in the

[2] The universality of democracy in terms of a promotion of individual rights is more than simply an ideological evolution. This shift is tied into historical events, shifting power structures, the rise of capitalism, and a myriad of other factors. The idea of democratic values as an evolution is also somewhat disturbing, because throughout history, women and other disenfranchised groups have called for their equality and individual rights, but they have been met with repeated resistance, even within supposedly democratic communities.

world, many of which relate to the gradual adoption and legal recognition of democratic human rights. Resulting from the historical shifts of the last fifteen years, when many Eastern European countries transformed from communist to democratic regimes, and globalization eased the exchange of cultures, ideas and people,[3] there has been a growing emphasis on the democratic values of individuality. The paradigm of western nationalism and its associated ideas of military and economic superiority over lesser powers seemed to hit a socio-political peak in the two world wars. Since then, while post-colonialism rallyed around national self-determination, colonial notions of nationhood as an expression of racial/religious/ethnic superiority gave way to more liberal and fragmented literary articulations of identity – national, subcultural, gender, and sexual. Similar forces (the democratic desire for national self-determination and the critique of inequality within the newly democratic states) can also be seen at work in the recently (since the early 1990s) independent Eastern European nations – albeit with a much more densely packed schedule of changes.

For contemporary literatures, perhaps unlike any other previous period in history, this process has involved a dramatic increase in works being produced by women, from all over the world. This surge of literary activity has produced celebrated authors who have become major artistic and political voices within their immediate communities, and at times, within international and global communities. Women's writing is no longer relegated to a handful of privileged women around the world. While it is not necessarily as powerful a social force as writing by men, in the

[3] The significance of the newly born post-Soviet countries can be noticed in the way that they changed the European Union, or in the way they are changing the demographics of the USA or the UK.

early years of the twenty-first century, writing by and about women has evolved into a consistent force, with many authors becoming a part of their national canons. In Canada, names like Atwood, Brossard, Munro, and Roy have become representative of a powerful cultural shift; similarly, in Lithuania, Juknaitė and Ivanuskaitė are more than simply popular authors. Like their Canadian counterparts, certain Lithuanian women writers are representatives of a socio-political shift that has included the articulation of an often provocative and culturally disruptive voice of subjectivity and identity. In the female literary characters of these authors, motherhood, body/language, and historical forces, such as globalization, converge, providing a literary space for female expression, protest, confusion, and rumination.

Contemporary Lithuanian women's literary writing needs to be situated not only in the prevalent feminist tradition of the search for a female self, but also in the specific historical moment for Lithuanian literature at large. When discussing post-Soviet literature, Rimvydas Šilbajoris observes: "Lithuanian letters after the reestablishment of independence in 1991 appear to reflect the nation's search for its own Word – that is to say, for itself" (231). Women's literature of the time complicates this national search for itself by situating women characters in dramatic historical moments, as well as investingating the positioning of contemporary women within the tradition of post-Soviet national search for self. Like many national literatures, Lithuanian writers turn to myth translated into poetry:

> The notion of myth in Lithuania is not primarily narrative, for there are not many stories told. It is instead poetic, for it conveys a certain

> wordless experience of being a part of some timeless mystery that includes an ancient, secure belonging to every thing that grows and dies in the world of nature. (Šilbajoris 231)

Although there are a number of women poets, the contemporary popular literature is dominated by women's prose writing. Shying away from poetry, these women experiment, in a certain measure, with the poetic tradition, employing a sort of in-between genre of prose and free verse, as is demonstrated most clearly in Ivanauskaitė's and Juknaitė's fiction. Lithuanian women writers search for a feminine sense of self within a problematic context of post-colonial national identity search (which is also true for Atwood, for instance).

Following the independence of the post-communist countries, such as Lithuania, western feminist ideas, together with post-modern philosophy, have been entering the academic and popular literary discourses of these countries. On a related political level, the integration of culturally marginalized groups, equality, and open dialogue have become the principles according to which the new democracies are being evaluated within the international arena. Although in many new Eastern European democracies women do not constitute a minority, they continue to face marginalization and discrimination. As a result, the improvement of women's social, political and personal status has come to the forefront of national and international political agendas across Eastern Europe; literary works have been a part of this trend. Moreover, in such a dynamic political climate, when notions of identity and subjectivity are explored in literature, women's writing bears a particularly immediate

impact, often influencing social discourse. In part, this is because of the vibrant atmosphere within which post-Soviet Lithuanian writers found themselves. In his *World Literature Today* overview, "Post-Soviet Literature in Lithuania," Rimvydas Šilbajoris describes the general literary climate:

> With the coming of independence in 1991, when Lithuanian literature was finally freed from the belly of the whale, it was not in a submissive mood. A number of writers cried out fiercely, pointing to the wounds inflicted upon the nation, sometimes in a language as ugly as the evils they were protesting against. (Šilbajoris 10)

Amongst the already heavy clouds of protest, writings by and about women have further electrified Lithuanian literature and social discourse, by questioning and exploring the possibilities of a new Lithuanian womanhood.

The so called "women's question" has variable meanings in societies with differing degrees of socio-economic development. For less developed countries, the improvement of women's status means providing girls with basic education and skills, which often involves enabling girls and women to have better reproductive health.[4] For more developed countries, the change in women's status happens on another level, for instance, by ensuring women equal political representation and

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[4] Despite the western academic debate over how biological women's subjectivity is, for women in many developing countries, the right to control one's biological difference is very important. For instance, for large segments of the world's female population, having an autonomous self means having the ability to make their own decision about whom to have sex with, about how many children to have or not to have and about not being exposed to female genital mutilation.

equal pay, or by critiquing stereotypical and discriminatory visual or verbal representations.[5] Lithuania exists somewhere between such extremes, while Canada is commonly recognized as a developed western nation. Despite the existence of intercultural dialogue and exchange, Western[6] paradigms of equality, agency and empowerment dictate the fashions of global change – at least, in Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, new policies geared towards the improvement of the status of women miss a very important, though still unresolved, debate over who women are (or, to be more exact, who women think they are), how one becomes a woman and what factors influence the formation of feminine subjectivities. Any study of women's selves, which would have an inter-cultural scope, therefore, is a helpful addition to the process of articulating paths to women's empowerment.

The birth of independence literature in Lithuania in the 1990s coincides with the rapid adoption of western models of improving the status of women and, in academia, established feminist models of subjectivity and identity. In such social trends, there is the implication that western society and feminist theory have evolved in ways that can provide guiding frameworks for the emerging political and literary feminism in Lithuania. On the one hand, this implication bears a certain hegemonic

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[5] Lithuania is neither a severely underdeveoped country nor a prosperous developed nation. In terms of representation, compared to North America, Eastern Europe may be more comfortable with certain things seen as discriminatory or inappropriate in North America. To give a general example of such discriminatory representation, in most Eastern European markets, the presentation of women's exposed bodies in advertisements geared to male consumers continues to be perceived as acceptable. For a more specific example, in Canada, movie rental/sales stores have a separate section for adult films; the section is often closed off from those who are underage. However, in Lithuania, it is not unusual to see a variety of films (from children's films to pornographic films) displayed very close to one another in popular businesses. Most importantly, the display of nude women in provocative sexual poses on the cover of DVDs in the main displays of mainstream stores is not considered inappropriate, because women are still largely associated with sexual display and consumption.

[6] Meaning Western European and North American.

force, whereby western politics and ideas, although useful examples, risk overwhelming the cultural uniqueness of the Lithuanian condition, nullifying socio-historical differences, and merging the Lithanian feminist literary voice into the choir and songbook already established by western feminists. On the other hand, there are enough connecting notes between women writing about the female condition to warrant claims of a harmony amongst otherwise distinct voices. A difficulty arises when attempting to articulate the end of hegemony and the beginning of an authentic harmony within feminist discourse and throughout the process of comparing literatures.

Several discourses of feminist studies have focused on visibly or sexually marginalized groups of women (women of color, women of lower social classes or women from less developed countries, as well as queer or transgendered women) shifting attention away from the dominant group of white, educated, heterosexual women and positioning them as the oppressors, overlooking the challenges faced by the female voice from "richer" countries, "privileged" backgrounds, and "better" education. This tendency becomes a particular problem for a largely monocultural nation, such as Lithuania.[7] Regardless of the differences in economies, language, and culture, after Lithuanian independence, Lithuanian women became a part of a global

[7] This is not to say that voices from Lithuanian minorities (such as Roma) are not important. Rather, it is to point out the risk of reducing emerging identities into prevailing international discourses about racial difference. That is, there is a risk of hastily amalgamating emerging literary voices along the binary colour line of whiteness versus non-whiteness. Such connections (of whiteness and non-whiteness) need to be handled carefully. A related issue is overlooking the cultural complexity of skin tone. Many people with lighter and darker skin are not simply white or black; rather, they may have a mix in their backgrounds. For instance, the Lithuanians of Tartar descent look ethnically white today, but they are also related to a people from the Middle East. Beyond skin tone, when cultural mixing (religious, national, ethnic, regional) in general is acknowledged, then identity becomes even more variable and complicated.

community of women; in particular, they became part of a global democratic capitalist community of white women. That is, on the global stage, the discourse of western, imperial white womanhood immediately affects the possibility of a distinct sense of Lithuanian womanhood. Within the climate of rapidly[8] articulating the visibly or sexually marginalized, white, educated, hetereosexual womanhood is often reduced to a powerful and dominant victimizer, even though white, educated, hetereosexual womanhood is composed of complicated, varied, and even contradictory voices. As the following comparative literary analysis aims to demonstrate, white women in countries like Lithuania and Canada continue to face interesting challenges in search of their empowerment. These challenges manifest themselves in the process of women's conceptualization of self through their maternal, sexual/physical experiences and their attempts to position their conceptualized selves in their changing historical/cultural contexts.

The following study of the notion of women's selves and of women's attempts to voice the experience of the *sujet en procès*[9] will compare the narratives of Canadian and Lithuanian women writers within the period between of the 1970s to the 1990s. Although Canadian and Lithuanian cultures, as well as their histories, are quite different, these periods share some important similarities in terms of women's

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[8] I say rapidly, because the urge to expressing the marginalized appears rushed in the political sense of dealing with the marginalized. While it is highly valuable to allow for the visibly and sexually marginalized to voice themselves, in some contexts, their voice may be part of a larger agenda, which only wants to superficially handle marginalized people and their issues. For instance, in Europe, while funding for an autobiography by a Roma woman is valuable and makes for good political advertising, it does little to solve widespread and entrenched social problems facing the Roma commnity.

[9] This term is borrowed from Kristeva's works. It is defined in the following chapter.

status and literary self-determination. The identification of cross-cultural similarities has sparked my interest in comparing (and contrasting) these particular literatures.

To start with, both Canada and Lithuania have a very peculiar colonial memory. Historically, Canada began as a British and French colony, the memory of which can be found in literary narratives as marks on language, themes of displacement, and a struggle to conceive of an independent sense of national self. Colonial discourse is often applied to women's literary studies as well as political studies. As noted by Wayne Fraser in *The Dominion of Women: The Personal and the Political in Canadian Women's Literature*:

> If the colonial metaphor is apt for the condition of women in general, it is particularly appropriate for Canadian women--for their country has struggled under the bondage of imperialism. Canada was established as a colony of Great Britain and her parliamentary government, with the Crown of England at its head, retains traces of colonialism to the present day. Canada as an economic colony of the United States is an equally accepted concept which has been much discussed since World War II, during the pipeline debate of 1955 and, more recently, during debates over the Free Trade Agreement. (xviii)

Although Canada is not traditionally thought of as a colony (and Canadian women as colonized) in the same way as India, or the African and South American countries (and women), the colonial past and present have been extensively examined in

Canadian literature, and, in a peculiar way, in Canadian women's literature. Literary critics, such as Barbara Hill, in *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel* (1978), Lorna Irvine, in *Sub/Version: Canadian Fiction by Women* (1986), and Coral Ann Howells in *Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s* (1987), have studied Canadian colonial history through the personified stories of Canadian women writers.

Lithuania, similarly, has undergone multiple colonization experiences – the longest ones being of Russian and Polish occupation. Apart from discussions on how to share some prominent Lithuanian-Polish writers (such as Adam Miskiewich or Czeslaw Milosz), Lithuanian literary, linguistic and political discourses are struggling with the construction of an independent notion of Lithuanian national self. Despite its relative autonomy, as a marker of identity, "Canadianess" has also been a routinely contested concept, complicated by corresponding changes in immigration policies and the development of an increasingly multi-ethnic Canadian literature. Moreover, both Canada and Lithuania are situated in the context of artistic colonization. Canadian literature developed in the shadow of Old World (British and French) and New World (American) literature, while Lithuanian literature developed alongside Russian and Polish literature. Increasingly, in Lithuania, the idea of a cross-influential Baltic literature is becoming possible, but historically, the influence has largely been Russian and Polish.[10] American and Canadian English are highly similar languages,

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[10] In recent times, there has been a revival of interest in native Candian language and in the languages of multicultural communities; in addition, American Spanish has been gaining greater importance in terms of altering the American influence on Canadian literature. Such changes may influence the future development of Canadian literature.

excepting variations in spelling, while Quebec French presents some linguistic variation for North American literature, which has largely been an English language literature. In contrast, Lithuania has only one national language and its linguistic connection to Russian and Polish is relatively weak.[11] Violeta Kelertas, in her "Perceptions of the Self and the Other in Lithuanian Postcolonial Fiction, " notes:

> There is a definite need to examine in what respects the experience of Balts as Europeans colonized for fifty years differs from the sensibilities already described in existing scholarship on India, Africa, South America, even Canada. (I refer here to the work of Bhabha, Spivak, Sommer, and the authors around the influential early collection *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*.)[12]

Traditionally, Baltic, and, more specifically, Lithuanian literatures are not thought of as post-colonial. Neither does there exist any critical literary discourse that would allow one to conceptualize the post-Soviet experiences, specifically, those of women writers. In this way, the comparative academic study of (especially post-1960s era) Canadian women's literature can serve as one tentative model for post-Soviet Lithuanian women's literature. Although Lithuanian women's view and experiences of history have not been as widely analyzed as those of Canadian women, there are

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[11] Russian and Polish are both Slavic languages, whereas Lithuanian is a Baltic language.
[12] *World Literature Today*. Volume: 72. Issue: 2. Publication Year: 1998. 253.

more attempts being made to revisit Lithuanian literary and social histories. This thesis is one attempt to begin the management of the points of contact between a selection of western literature and feminist theory with some burgeoning Lithuanian literature and theory.

The use of North American and Western European feminist methodology, as well as the comparison of a North American literature to an Eastern European one could be interpreted as another attempt at colonization. Discussing the inter-relationships betwen Eastern European and American feminism in her article "Feminism in Central and Eastern Europe: Risks and possibilities of American Engagement," Frances Elisabeth Olsen observes a danger of American feminist engagement in Central and Eastern Europe:

> There is also a risk that a kind of new colonialism will filter into the efforts of American women, preventing them from working effectively in Central and Eastern Europe. Perhaps the most obvious danger is simply the privileging of gender over all other categories, despite massive differences in national wealth.

A comparative study of literatures from North America and Eastern Europe, despite its arguably restricted scope, puts these different literary and critical traditions into a dialogue thereby avoiding colonizing either of them. The following analysis situates the literary works within the historical and cultural context of their production, and

employs the North American and Western European critical paradigms cautiously, putting them into a dialogue with their Eastern European counterparts.

One could find many more historical, political and social similarities between Canadian and Lithuanian literature, but the following comparative study also allows for a look into the platform or wider context surrounding women's writing. Although all the writers under analysis are different as human beings and even though there are several important differences between Canada and Lithuania, as citizens, as women and as writers, the female authors under analysis have grown out of a comparable context into a similar literary environment, which warrants analysis. Early twentieth century women in Canada, like women in Soviet Lithuania (during the 1950s), were women in a marginalized position, but with a strong social role. To name a few women writers, Sara Jeannette Duncan, Nellie McClung or Susanna Moodie in Canada, and Žemaitė, Pečkauskaitės, Bitė, and others in Lithuania, were all considered important women, but they were seen as important primarily for their socio-political role.

Post-1960s Canadian women writers were writing in a period characterized by "volatile politics and rising nationalism" and the Women's Liberation Movement. They were influenced by the publications of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (Fraser 100). Similarly, Lithuanian women writers of the 1990s found themselves in the period of volatile Lithuanian politics, rising nationalism and conservative social views, arguing for women's return to the role of the housewife; simultaneously, Lithuanian women writers were also exposed to feminist discourses, including those

of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Like in other areas of post-Soviet Lithuanian life, Lithuanian literature has to catch up with the developments of world literature. However, if literary history were seen as a linear development, one would notice how Lithuanian women writers have leapt over some of the thematic and stylistic developments of feminist literature, which were more gradual in western literature.

Due to these historical, political and literary developments, such as socialist realist tradition in the Soviet Union, Lithuanian romantic writing, as well as early twentieth century women's writing influence, contemporary Lithuanian women's writing can be realist and post-modern at the same time. Like many people in newly independent Lithuania, women writers often struggle financially. There still are women writers who do not have a room of their own to write in, to use Woolf's expression. Just recently, a well-known writer and journalist, forty-nine year old Zita Čepaitė, has emigrated to England in order to find work as a cleaner, which would allow her to make a better living than she would if she were to stay in Lithuania. On the other hand, there are the radical, experimental (in both style and themes) and highly sexualized writings of the recently deceased Jurga Ivanauskaitė. Paradoxically, although she writes about drug abusers or poor youth (for example, in her short story collections *Pakalnučių metai, Mėnulio vaikai)*, Ivanauskaitė comes from a more educated family and has had more recognition than the newly emerging writers. With increasing access to international book markets, the influence of the Internet, and the resulting exposure to both old and new literary criticisms and works, Lithuanian women's literature is rapidly evolving, experimenting with the known traditions and

finding unusual ways of re-creating Lithuanian feminities in creative fiction. The following comparative analysis should assist in the understanding of Canadian and Lithuanian fictional women's subjectivity formation, while also demonstrating the political, social and literary influences on international and nationally specific notions of women's self.

Despite the relationship between Canadian and Lithuanian women's literature as objects of comparison, the following study, like many other comparative literature studies, is also determined by a creative interest in comparing otherwise disparate cultural spheres. In *Comparative Literature*, Henry Gifford claims, "'Comparative literature' cannot pretend to be a discipline on its own. I should rather define it as an area of interest – one that was proclaimed by Goethe when he predicted a *Weltliteratur* in which all the nations would have their voice" (xi). While we have not necessarily achieved a global synthesis of literature as Goethe envisioned in his notion of *Weltiliteratur*, globalization has intensified the value of comparative literature. Although Canada and Lithuania have different "voices," maybe because of it, juxtaposing them may have creative academic value, especially within an increasingly globalized world, where cultures, their literatures, and the study of their literatures are coming in greater contact with one another. Moreover, there is an arguably democratic and international eagerness underlying the movement to voice female identities and issues. Comparative studies of literature should help manage the process of inevitable cross-cultural contact that, in fact, is already occuring across the world. A comparative study of Canadian and Lithuanian works should also aid in

clarifying the common concerns and the more unique voices within the developing canon of feminist world literature.

The philosophical importance of expressing one's voice is central to the functioning of democratic states, for it is the voice of the populace, via voting, that determines governing power, and it is the voice of the market that influences national and international economies. Socially, voices help establish national, gender, linguistic, religious, and cultural identities, as is evident with the role of women writers in different countries who explore and develop female identity through literature. Gifford made his claim about the interdisciplinary nature of Comparative Literature in 1969, in a time when the world was rather different. Several nations had already or would soon complete a move away from being colonies towards national self-definition, while the Cold War rearranged the world's various pieces, dividing the globe into two main and opposing spheres of influence. While the effects and after-effects of this division is implicit in western literatures, they are pronounced in Eastern European literatures, where the communist ideological sphere has been recently replaced by the democratic capitalist one.

Today, societies continue to be interested in self-definition, through the preservation and development of national literatures, art, film, and media. For Benedict Anderson, a nation is an "imagined community." That is, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Imagined communities are the result of print capitalism, where the use of the vernacular helped to satisfy interest in profit (by

ensuring wide circulation) and establish a link amongst readers. Anderson believes the first European nations formed through the establishment of printed vernacular literature, a sort of national adhesive for a community of reading consumers.

The pursuit of national identity through literature has not been completely abandoned by countries within an increasingly globalized world. Far from it, like the shift from the colonial to the post-colonial age, with shifts in power from the Soviet to the post-Soviet era in Eastern Europe, there has been a renewed interest in defining one's nation as a unique, distinct, and valuable cultural and linguistic community. Attempts at self-definition often occur through not only print methods, but also extend into film, media, music, and the Internet.[13] To qualify the cross-cultural platform upon which contemporary world literature is being produced, despite the continued interest in national self-definition, the world has changed, with globalism and information technology being at the forefront of such changes. As a result, there has also been a move for nations to forge wider, international identities, such as becoming a part of the European Union. In addition, the development of trans-national communities through specified identities (such as feminists) has become increasingly significant, as has the articulation and embodiment of an individual's identification with multiple communities (such as a Lithuanian female writer or a Canadian female writer).

Modifying Gifford's characterization of comparative literature through the filter of Benedict Anderson, the contemporary context of globalization, and changes

[13] Efforts to enter the world stage as a distinct national voice also occurs through international markets, and through national and international events, such as sporting competitions.

in geopolitical boundaries and interests, several, often overlapping, but distinct voices have emerged in recent years. In 2007, beyond the era of the binary opposition between superpowers, the world, in many ways, is more unified or, certainly, less identifiable as a clear binary between political and economic systems. However, seen in another way, the world is more fragmented than it was when the United States and the Soviet Union were at their powerful peaks. If Gifford, referring to Goethe, speaks of national voices, then today, the voices of several other communities (unified by gender, sexual orientation, ethnic minority status, and so on) seek recognition, and often, they imagine such an identity through print literature. Women are one such voice.[14]

To a certain degree, the choice of comparing a Canadian female writer's voice with a Lithuanian female writer's voice is "arbitrary."[15] There are several writers from different nations, who would be equally worthy of a sustained academic study. However, perhaps as with most contemporary identity comparisons, the choice of Lithuanian female writers and Canadian female writers is still a valuable one, on its own, because it offers an innovative glimpse into two societies struggling with multiple identities, with a central one being a female identity within democratic capitalist patriarchies. Both Lithuania and Canada are relatively small bilingual nations. Canada is officially bilingual, with English and French; but, unofficially, Canada hosts several linguistic communities. The main linguistic community in

[14] Although there may be a unity in terms of gender, there is also important distinctions within such trans-national communities, such as nationhood, language, religion, ethnicity, and class.

[15] Random is perhaps not the best word, but there may be a randomness in the sense that an ultimate justification of any scholarly interest may be rooted in much wider circumstances and experiences, that extend far beyond the academic, into all of the variable factors that influence the interests, tastes, and fields of an academic.

Lithuania is Lithuanian, but there is an important generational divide, with older generations who know Russian and with younger generations learning English. As with many European nations, the Lithuanian school system actively encourages the study of several European languages, with the most popular being German, French, and Spanish. So, while Lithuania is primarily mono-cultural and mono-religious, like Canada, Lithuania is not without an exposure to several linguistic spheres. Also, like Canada exists in the shadow of more powerful nations, geographically (the United States) and historically (the United Kingdom), Lithuania is surrounded by more powerful global players.

There are several differences between Lithuania and Canada, which also help to make for an enriching study of different communities in different stages of self-definition, both nationally, and within the world stage. The women's movement is an international phenomenon, with ideas that have spread from certain, usually North American and European centers to other communities. Of utmost importance, the move from communist rule to democratic capitalism is coloured by the language of maturation or the almost melodramatic rhetoric of feminist independence.[16] The claim is melodramatic not necessarily because of the rhetoric of excess, but because of the domestic imagery that is associated with melodrama, which may personalize historical tensions by mapping them onto the domestic sphere, and which stresses the emotional elements aroused by such tensions. In other words, an Eastern European

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[16] For people of visible ethnic status (especially former colonies) and for nations whose cultures have been suppressed (although they may be of the same skin colour as their colonizers, such as the inhabitants of Eastern European nations), the arrival of democracy comes with the powerful rhetoric of pursuit of liberty, from slavery to the moral (universal human right) and (international) legal justice of attaining freedom.

nation has left the abusive authoritative husband of communism to become free and independent. She has suffered like a caged fairy tale princess, until the knight sets her free with the awakening kiss of democratic capitalism. Finally, she can live happily ever after. Implicitly, she gains a voice of her own. The young lady is even being wooed by powerful partners, such as the European Union. Unfortunately, such a characterization is complicated by the fact that most democratic capitalist states are steeped in patriarchy, and that the working woman, a marker of democratic freedom, existed as a norm under Soviet rule.

Since capitalist democracies are promoted and defined by what they combat, women have become a potent and visible, yet contested, symbol of successful or unsuccessful democratic states. The democratic fear of an elite corruptly abusing the market system, and suppressing the sovereign right of the private citizen becomes a major problem for societies rooted in and typified by patriarchy. Yet, most democracies are patriarchal. The contradiction within many democratic capitalist societies center upon an "elite" male populace, or a significant population of women who are not afforded the same rights (legally or socially) as their fellow male citizens. Capitalist corruption or abuse would include the subordination of women to unpaid domestic roles and a lack of equity (in pay, advancement, and opportunity) within the workforce, or a lack of expression within national literature. Capitalist abuse is also mapped upon the female body, for, even within, or maybe especially within, fair and free democratic capitalist societies, the physical female form and image are highly bankable commodities, used to help sell other consumable products. Indeed, the sexualized female is bought and sold in the underground market of prostitution, or in

the more legitimate market of strip clubs. Her image adorns magazine covers and CDs; she dominates fashion runways and appears in countless television commercials and website pop-up advertisements. In her actual form, she is sought after through mail-order bride systems; or, she becomes a marker of the successful patriarch. Because of how she complicates the ideals of democratic capitalism, it is safe to say that the image of the sexualized female body generates those other highly sought after images, the ink-dot portraits of paper currency.

When discussing women's literature and women's experiences in general, it is easy to slip into generalizing, essentializing and limiting discussions. Beauvoir's famous "*What is a woman?*" questions the traditional representations of womanhood, and assumes there is a fixed notion of a woman. Nevertheless, without any attempts to generalize, can the analyses of women's experiences be seen as relevant and not merely limited to a particular field, culture or country? These questions and doubts will remain a reservation throughout this work. Although women's subjectivity will be the object of the following analysis, it will not be posited as conclusive or exclusive. Although the analysis will aim to answer the question of women's selfhood, it will do so acknowledging the impossibility of finding a conclusive answer. The apparent pointlessness of such a search should be measured against the discursive value it possesses in the process of questioning the existing theories and practices, as well as the value of placing two cultural spheres, Canadian and Lithuanian, into literary dialogue. The choice of women's selfhood as the subject of study may be merely a subjective one, but, in a democratic academic environment, subjective subject choices and the resulting scholarly voice are valuable. So is, to a

certain extent, the choice of the period and the origin of literature under analysis[17]. Whether random and subjective, or by some grand meaning or great design, the topic of interest and works studied serve an important intellectual function: the comparison of Canadian and Lithuanian women's literature provides a glimpse of how dominant Western European and North American feminist theories are challenged in the writings of the established multicultural democracy of Canada and the writings of the developing mono-cultural democracy of Lithuania.

The analysis of women's literary subjectivities as represented in Canadian and Lithuanian women's works can also provide a glimpse into the intercultural, arguably global and contemporary debate over women's status. Particularly in countries like Lithuania, where independence brought a greater degree of freedom of expression, there still is a lack of such debate; hopefully, a thesis such as this will contribute to the debate and inspire others to join in the discussion. Before laws are issued, adopted, and implemented, despite the fact that they have arguably been successful for women in other countries, it is important to first discuss who these laws are for – who are the women? Are Lithuanian/Latvian/Hungarian women similar to the women of France, the United Kingdom or the USA for whom the right to vote, to have abortion or equal working conditions meant empowerment? The following survey of possible theories of women's subjectivities is by no means a definite explanation of the phenomenon, but it may serve as a background influencing the understanding and

[17] There are some important similarities between the status of Canadian women in 1970s and the Lithuanian women's status in 1990s. For instance, the tension between the sexual liberation of women and the conservative social values arguing for women's primary role as a wife and a mother. The comparison of women writers' reaction to this tension, therefore, offers a unique scope to literary theory studies.

presentation of women in contemporary society. Thus, to further the answer to Beauvoir's question, it is educationally valuable to survey and criticize the classical, enlightened, psychoanalytical and political theories of subjectivity. Further, the analysis of most prominent feminist theories will attempt to demonstrate the weakness in feminist conceptualizations of women's subjectivity.

Answering the question why one compares one literature to another is both a simple and a complex one to answer. It is simple, because comparison requires a comparative standard, or the establishment of relevant similarities and differences that warrant the academic analysis of at least two different literatures. In another way, however, the question is complex, because it disrupts the very definition of comparative literature. Inherently interdisciplinary, comparative literature does just that, it compares, among other things, at least two different types of literature, most notably, two literatures from different linguistic, but also from varying cultural or temporal realms.

Attempts to answer why one compares disrupt or expose the very definition of comparative literature, which is to compare and contrast texts from two differing cultural spheres. Appropriately, using the methodology of comparative literature can help deflect such a disruption. Often, by comparing artworks from different cultures, comparative literature allows one to gain some insight into how different cultures think, conceive, or perceive of the world and their relation to it. In one way then, the question why does one compare seemingly disparate elements is indicative of a clash of worldviews, one comparative and another, more conservative (or monocultural), for the lack of a better term.

Nevertheless, such questioning over why one compares is not unrelated to a wider sense of insecurity floating throughout the humanities. Asking why one compares is related to a larger set of question about why one engages in many types of soft academic analyses. For instance, why does one study Shakespeare's plays? Or, why does one analyze Sylvia Plath's poems? Such questions lead to other questions, such as why does one even read Virginia Woolf, or why does one read literature at all? When contextualized within ideology of democratic capitalism, all of these questions bear the residue of a cultural environment dominated by immediate practical value and profit. The link between utility, profit, and studying engineering is clearer than the link between studying a handful of Canadian and Lithuanian women writers. Comparably, because of the obvious practical and financial benefits, an engineer or lawyer may not need to justify his or her pursuit. Under the measuring stick of economic utilitarianism, clearly, one can spend (note the wording) one's time more wisely (meaning profitably) by investing in the stock market, than wasting one's time in comparative literature – or even worse, wasting time comparing the literature of women.

Compared to other fields in the humanities, comparative literature foregrounds what is usually implicit in any analysis: comparison. When one analyzes a Shakespearean sonnet, without explicit comparison to other sonnets, one may try to establish the value of a sonnet, in which case, the author would be arguing for the worth of Shakespeare. Inherently, such a study utilizes an artistic standard; often such a standard is implicit or remains unspoken. In contrast, by its very definition, comparative literature scholarship exposes the differing artistic (or cultural, political,

and so on) standards of the text under examination. Put simply, comparison is an inherent element of analysis in the humanities, and comparative literature lays bare the critical function of comparison in academic analysis, by bringing the dynamic of comparison to the fore.

Primarily, this thesis will combine close literary analyses of women's work with a critical engagement with feminist crticisim, while contextualizing such discussion within wider socio-political forces. To employ Juliana de Nooy's description of literature as "an experience of borders and of a region where identity is yet unformed" and "as a means of surviving this experience by transforming it into language and even into beauty," the following study aims to investigate women's attempts to conjure an empowered and authentic subjectivity (Nooy). Investigating the hypothesis that due to development of feminist theory and feminist achievements in the social and political world women can independently experience their subjectivities as a fluid process, as well as express themselves freely at the end of the twentieth century, this study juxtaposes Lithuanian and Canadian women's writing. Although Baltic literature is becoming a more frequent object of study in international literary studies, comparative analyses of women's literature, specifically, Lithuanian and Canadian literary analysis is an underdeveloped field. Because of this underdevelopment, the study also necessitates some mention of wider, but related, socio-economic frameworks, particularly in terms of framing Lithuanian literature. A comparison of such different cultural spheres serves as an important examination of the above mentioned hypothesis, as it situates the question

of women's literary subjectivity in the international context of such post-colonial, post-modern and, continually, patriarchal nations of Lithuania and Canada.

The first chapter traces the development of subjectivity theories, examining how the notion of self transforms from the classical view of pre-destined subjectivity into the notion of transformable rational self. Connecting the philosophies of marginal self, this chapter critically examines a historical development of feminist subjectivity theories. Paying special attention to the psychoanalytic notions of feminine self, which have for long positioned women as deviant of men, I further trace Julia Kristeva's concept of *chora* and her attempts to reconstruct the Lacanian Law of the father in order to (re)introduce the importance of the maternal influence in the process of subjectivity formation. Building on Kristeva, Butler and Deleuze, this chapter sets the concept of *sujet en procès*, a fluid sense of subjectivity that depends upon which is used throughout the following study.

Examining the complexities of feminist theorizations of maternal experiences, the second chapter focuses on the comparative analysis of Gabrielle Roy' *The Road Past Altamont,* Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women,* as well as the Lithuanian Vanda Juknaitė's *Šermenys* (*The Wake*) and Ugnė Barauskaitė's *Dešimt* (*Ten*). The study of these works traces the constraints of spiritual, medical and intellectual discourses surrounding femininity, demonstrating the lack of a positive model of maternal subjectivity. Despite the contradictions between the pairing of science and religion, and because of the power of phallogocentrism strongly prevalent in contemporary – open, democratic and multilingual – society, women must

continually struggle to use restrictive discourses in order to construct a positive relationship with their maternal subjectivities.

Drawing heavily on the feminist criticism of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, the third chapter examines how Jurga Ivanauskaitė's *Ragana ir lietus* (*The Witch and the Rain*) and Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* employ a feminine language in the writing of the female body, as well as the overall significance of the corporeal language in the process of subjectivity creation. Despite feminist theorists' attempts to conjure empowering models of feminine subjectivity, enabling women to describe constructively their corporeal experiences, this analysis demonstrates that binary and antagonistic theories fail to provide women with possibilities of constructing a positive sense of self.

Finally, examining women's attempts to achieve empowerment in the age of democratic values, multiculturalism, pluralism and a respect for difference – all features of globalization – the fourth chapter demonstrates the failure of globalized society and post-modern feminist theorists to articulate positive means of women's subjectivity formation. Comparing Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* and Jurga Ivanauskaitė's *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies*), the analysis demonstrates how women's subjectivities are trapped by the patriarchal colonizer. This colonization of women's subjectivity results in a fragmented sense of subjectivity, along with a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Affected by deterritorialization, the rapid exchange of information, and greater social interconnectedness, the central female characters struggle with the tension between a sense of mortality and a search for purposefulness.

Chapter 1: Subjectivity Theories

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.

(W.B. Yeats "The Second Coming")

... I find it difficult today when I realize
that there is suddenly too much present,
around us, as if we were doing nothing
other than spanning across present
and multiplying futile gestures.

(Nicole Brossard "The Present, Presence")

Introduction

Despite ongoing queries in the field of subjectivity, feminine subjectivity remains a complicated field in the era of post-modern literature. Feminine subjectivity studies are frequently limited in terms of object of study, temporal perspective, or aspect of subjectivity. In order to make a comparatison of literary subjectivities in different literatures valid, it is imperative to establish a comprehensible notion of subjectivity which could be used at least in this study of literatures.

Theoretical analysis in contemporary academic writing provokes the same sense of difficulty as Brossard describes when talking about her relationship to the present. Subjectivity theories, on the one hand, often appear as multiplications of futile gestures – one repeating another without much critical engagement. On the

other hand, the search within this falling apart and decentralization of theories brings about unique insights into theories of self. The terms "subjectivity" and "identity" are frequently used synonymously as terms signifying a difference in perspective of determining who a person is. Someone's subjective understanding means its uniqueness and difference from other viewpoints. Someone's identity, similarly, demonstrates one's difference from others. Although these two terms can be synonymous, they denote different concepts in scholarly analyses. To start with the most basic definitions, identity, according to *Oxford Dictionary* is "the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing" (674). Such an understanding of identity entails something measurable, rational and relatively clearly defined. Identity is a more collective term defining one's belonging to a cultural, racial or social group. Kath Woodword, studying this concept in *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity*, distinguishes between identity and personality: "Identity is different from personality in important respects. We may share personality traits with other people, but sharing an identity suggests some *active* engagement on our part. We choose to *identify* with a particular identity or group. Sometimes we have more choice than others" (6). Although identity and personality are intertwined, there is a more collective sense to one's identity. It establishes a connection between a person and the society one lives in. A specific difference between identity and subjectivity is in the question of point of view. Subjectivity denotes one's own understanding of oneself, whereas "Identity combines how I see myself and how others see me. Identity involves the internal and the subjective, and the external" (Woodward 7).

"Subjectivity", in contrast, is a more complicated term. Philosophically, "subject" is

"a thinking or feeling entity; the conscious mind" (*Oxford Dictionary* 1383). Furthermore, "subjective" proceeds from "the individual consciousness or perception" and is "imaginary, partial or distorted" (1387). Thus, in the most basic understanding, the difference between these words is in terms of the perception of a person. A person's identity is related to the social perception and construction of who a person is, while subjectivity, on the other hand, is the way people perceive themselves through the efforts of their imagination and consciousness.

Although subjectivity is a fluid term, there are ways to evaluate or measure its representations. Morwena Griffiths, in *Feminisms and the Self: the Web of Identity* lists circumstances which impact the formation of subjectivity and are helpful in evaluating its literary representations. Namely, these are: "(1) agency; (2) control; (3) the subjective experience of fragmented, changing self or set of selves; and (4) the significance of bodies and material conditions" (Griffiths 82). Griffiths presents the notion of a self which grows through and with its material and social circumstances to develop into a coherent self, the possibility of which is rejected by radical feminists, such as Cixous or Irigaray. Nevertheless, the circumstances outlined by Griffiths offer a convenient starting point for subjectivity analysis.

To make matters more complicated, subjectivity needs to be analyzed in its contexts and relationships. Our subjectivities, although fashioned by us, are influenced by our relationships to people, the world, the language, our experiences and other factors that do or might influence our existence. The definition of a subject is dependent upon analyst's point of view. Regenia Gagnier, in her *Subjectivities: A*

History of Self-Representation in Britain 1832-1920, outlines the possible meanings of subjectivity:

> First, the subject is a subject to itself, an "I", however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this "I" from its own viewpoint, within its own experience. Simultaneously, the subject is a subject to, and of, others; in fact, it is often an "Other" to others, which also affects its sense of its own subjectivity... Third, the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being. Fourth, the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies; and the body, and therefore the subject, is closely dependent upon its physical environment. (Gagnier 8)

A study of the self[18] as a body (which is an aspect of subjectivity) is incomplete, if it does not position that body in relation to the experiences of that body, or the way the body is perceived or presented, described or analyzed. Thus, an analysis of a particular aspect of subjectivity is not complete unless an attempt is made to examine the aspect's relation to its context. Such multifold concept of self demonstrates how problematic or even impossible it is to analyze self as not other, or self as independent of dominant power discourse.

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[18] Self is discussed in this study as subjectivity.

Before surveying the historical development of the concept of subjectivity, it is necessary to point out the biases underlying the traditional Western theories of self. Due to the scientific and socio-political development of the Western world, "increasing self-control, a sense of self as origin of action and intention, an increasing capacity to use abstract logic, and a movement toward self-sufficiency characterize the maturation of the ideal Western self" (Jordan 135). Psychology, influenced by Newtonian physics, studied the self as a predictable, measurable and clearly defined entity. An ideal self was seen as a democratic self, in a sense that it was free, independent and individualistic rather than communal. Moreover, the philosophical influence of the Enlightenment, contributed to a concept of self which can and should be transformed, changed and managed. The following historical survey will demonstrate the development of these biases and concepts. Although Aristotelian, Freudian, Lacanian and other theories have been questioned, challenged and deconstructed to various extents, aspects of these theories continue to have an influence.

Classical view of subjectivity

Although the separation of time into clearly defined historical periods has its faults, for the sake of clarity, the following analysis will trace a historical development of identity and subjectivity theories. Classical Greek thinkers, Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, who initiated dichotomous explanation of the world order, viewed identity as pre-ordained and necessary for the construction of a well functioning state.

Plato's well-known division of citizens into guardians, soldiers and the general population provides a clear-cut explanation of who people are and what they need to do in order to serve the state. Unlike modern and post-modern views of self as somewhat autonomous and capable of self-definition or change, the classical thinkers perceive the subjectivity as a pre-ordained entity that serves a public function. T.Z. Lavine summarizes: "In the ideal city, the Republic which Socrates and his disciples are designing, each of these three classes will perform a vital function on behalf of the organic totality which is the society" (Lavine 58). In this understanding the self is not only independent of an individual, but also serves a larger function than just the goals of that individual. As noted by Hall, "in ways that may seem quite foreign to us, the notion of society working ideally through the discovery of, and adherence to, *preordained* truths and patterns resonates through classical thought" (Hall 7). The major difference between the classical and modern views of self, then, is the belief in its pre-ordained nature and the dutiful participation of the subject in the overall order of society. Charles Taylor, in his *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* traces this view of agency serving the greater good:

> The good life for human beings is as it is because of humans' nature as rational life. Humanity is part of the order of beings, each with its own nature. Each kind of thing…strives to reach its perfection and hence fulfills its nature. As agents, striving for ethical excellence, humans thus participate in the same rational order which they can also admire in science. (Taylor 125)

In other words, the development of one's self is a rational logical process, with the goal of fulfilling one's pre-ordained "nature." Unfortunately, such a view of selfhood does not allow for individualization. In its extreme, this view has allowed groups in power to dictate what is considered "natural" or "rational." The conceptualization of subjectivity as a measurable and predictable entity has lasted a long time in human history and has manifested itself in discrimination of different groups of people.

Although feminist theorists have challenged the notions of women's selves as more related to nature, more emotional and irrational than those of men, radical feminist theories, nevertheless, echo the traditional patriarchal constructions of femininity. Radical feminism, however, emphasize different aspects of this construction: „... radikaliajam feminizmui moteris yra stipri, o jos ryšys su gamta yra jos stiprybės galių šaltinis" [19] (Daugirdaitė, *Rūpesčių moterys, moterų rūpesčiai: moteriškumo reprezentacija naujausioje lietuvių moterų prozoje*, 18). Similarly, Greek goddess archetypes are used by feminist psychotherapists to treat women's self-rejection, which has formed in patriarchal societies: „Graikų deivės leidžia identifikuotis ne tik su dukra, motina ar žmona, bet ir su vieniša medžiotoja, dvasine vadove..." [20] (Daugirdaite 19). Arguably, then, women have managed to find empowerment even in the disadvantaged philosophical paradigms.

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[19] For radical feminism, the woman is strong, and her relationship with nature is the source of her strength and her powers.

[20] Greek goddesses allow to identify not only with a daughter, a mother or a wife, but also with a lonely hunter, spiritual guide...

The rational self

Continuing into the Middle Ages and greatly influencing religious explorations of identity, the self is characterized by its belonging to the ideal world and its usefulness for the society with the only agency to fulfill the preordained role. The rise and development of humanism and belief in the existence of individualism is reflected in a new view of the state, which Tony Davies characterizes as the birth of "the modern nation state, populated and animated by individual citizens (Davies 16-17). Identity theories, emerging from the world of changing truths started examining the "tension between freedom and constraint, self-creation and morally responsible limitation" (Hall 19). René Descartes, writing amidst these philosophical changes, postulated the formation of subjectivity as a process of doubting that which is known or believed. He examined this process in his "Discourse on Method":

> …I rejected as being false all the reasonings I had hitherto accepted as proofs. And…I resolved to pretend that nothing which had ever entered my mind was any more true than the illusion of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I became aware that, while I decided thus to think that everything was false, it followed necessarily that I who thought thus must be something; and observing that this truth: *I think, therefore I am,* was so certain and so evident that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were not capable of shaking it,

> I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking. (Descartes 53-54)

Although the Cartesian view of identity has been attacked vigorously by feminist critics, which will be examined later, it contains the roots of what becomes known as post-modern identity theories that propose the view of self as not a fixed entity, but an entity in process. In other words, doubting one's knowledge is the basis of individual subjectivity. Thus, this subjectivity theory breaks from the classical view of the self as pre-ordained and serving the greater good. However, in spite of the emphasis on individuality and a higher degree of agency, Descartes is continuing the belief in rationality and places emphasis on the thinking process.

The view of agency, reflected in the still prevalent American dream, has influenced contemporary views of self formation. The Cartesian perception of identity claims that "*if one thinks and works hard enough, one can make oneself into a better person*" (Hall 21). Descartes offers a new view of agency, where one is responsible not for fitting into a hierarchical social structure, but for rationalizing and more or less actively creating one's subjectivity. Such a position is "clearly non-authoritarian. It liberates the individual to seek for himself or herself" (Thomson 25). The individual is no longer in possession of a pre-ordained identity which allows him[21] to be part of a coherent society, but, on the contrary, he is responsible for rationally questioning his existence and exercising power over his selfhood.

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[21] The use of pronoun 'he' is deliberate here, as the theorists of the time perceive selfhood to be a masculine matter.

While Descartes elaborated on the origin of the self, demonstrating how the self is born out of thinking, philosophers of the later ages, such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant focused on the power of reason (key characteristic of the Enlightenment period) to perfect not only the self but also the society one exists in. Building on the Cartesian belief in the power of reason, Locke and his contemporaries identified "discrete aspects of the self that requires attention, or in other words, *objectifying* components of our *subjective* experience" (Hall 24). Locke set the binary and hierarchical standards for conceptualizing self, whereby the emotional can and should be subjected to the power of reason:

> For the mind having in most cases... a power to *suspend* the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires, and so all, one after another, is at liberty to consider the objects of them; examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others. In this lies the liberty Man has; and from the not using it right comes all that variety of mistakes, errors and faults which we run into, in the conduct of our lives... (Locke 263-264)

Locke's subjectivity theory clearly brings its benefits, as it presents the vision of selfhood which can be constructed by a rational being trying to improve himself. However, as feminist identity theory critics have later observed, it is a problematic theory, as it posits Man as the standard (and the only one capable) of perfection and worthy of the notion of liberty Locke talks about. Moreover, it presents reason as exclusive of emotion and desire and, therefore, as a better standard in the hierarchical

structure of personal values. This binary hierarchy has influenced the prevalence of philosophical paradigms discriminatory of women.

Participating in intellectual debates with Locke and Hume, Immanuel Kant proposed complex theories that "defended the ability of reason to decide between right and wrong and even to construct inviolable, universal law" (Hall 27). This emphasis on clearly defined universals is the reason why Kant's theories continue to be problematic for feminist theorists. A belief in the existence of a universal right or wrong excludes minority groups from having the "right" identity, as "Kant's "universalities" were only those of a particular time, place and social position" (Hall 28). Reflecting the beliefs of his time, Kant considered women to be incapable of rational behavior and, by extension, unable to construct a "universally" right and coherent self.

The marginal self

Another theory of subjectivity which offers an important contribution to women's identity theories are theories of slavery and subjectivity. As the previous discussion demonstrated, "universal claims regarding personhood and interpersonal responsibility often reflect deep-seated biases and can contain significant exceptions" (Hall 33). The women's rights and abolitionists' movements of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drew the attention to numerous right abuses in practice and in theory. First and foremost, the members of racial minorities demanded to be considered human and to be able to speak for themselves. As a response to identity

theories of Locke, Hume and Kant,[22] W.E.B. Du Bois examines the effect of racism on the self-understanding of African Americans. The most interesting change in the understanding of subjectivity offered by Du Bois is his identification of a "double self":

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 3)

Du Bois offers a new conception of identity where a subject can have multiple positions rather than one coherent whole. Moreover, Du Bois suggests the subject's ability or need to merge the self-perception of a person and the perception of others. This view challenges the belief in the existence of a universal, a right or wrong subject that depends upon the skin color or the gender of the person. Du Bois' notion of a "hyphenated and at times internally contestatory" self will be later discussed as part of the feminist identity studies.

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[22] These three philosophers not only expressed discriminatory ideas in their theoretical treates or their work. Locke "advocated colonial conquest, and denied the right to rebel against the colonial power" (Andrew 1988: 62). Hume openly considered "Negroes....to be naturally inferior to whites" (qtd Gates 1985a: 10), whereas Kant "was one of the earliest major European philosophers to conflate color with intelligence" (10).

The first feminist theorist responding to the ideas of Locke and, more directly, to the discriminatory works of Rousseau[23] was Mary Wollstonecraft. Notwithstanding Wollstonecraft's contribution to women's conditions and feminist theory as a whole, her writings impart an ideal of a woman who is as enlightened and rational as an eighteenth century man. Essentially, Wollstonecraft concurs with Rousseau and Kant (and others) regarding the irrationality of women, but, differently, she believes in women's ability to change their self like men are. In line with the century's beliefs, Wollstonecraft argues for the need to educated women:

> Asserting the rights which women in common with men ought to contend for, I have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in society. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that they will change their character, and correct their vices and follies, when they are allowed to be free in a physical, moral and civil sense. (Wollstonecraft 194)

Clearly, Wollstonecraft's proposition attempts to improve the social life of women and challenge the reasoning of male theorists who claim that women are *naturally* faulty. A more challenging facet of her position is the fact that she essentially proposes the social construction of identity. In other words, Wollstonecraft contests

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[23] In *Emile* (1762) and his other works Rousseau expressed very conservative views of women's identity, whereby women possess only domestic and maternal nature which is impossible to change. Amidst the evolving theories of subjectivity that defend man's ability to perfect his nature, Rousseau's view of womanhood pointed out the hypocricies of white man-oriented subjectivity theories.

the belief in the universality of identity by demonstrating that selfhood can be altered not only by practicing self-control, as argued by Locke, but, to a greater extent, through the alteration of socialization practices. Similarly to Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill continued what is now termed as liberal feminist theory arguing that institutional changes in society could allow women to realize themselves to their full potential.

Liberal feminism has contributed greatly to improving women's social position by winning the right to vote, have education and hold property. However, the development of feminist movement has demonstrated how liberal feminists were exclusive of women from less privileged backgrounds, such as women from low social classes or women of different races. As pointed out by Ruth Robbins in *Literary Feminisms*: "liberal feminists sometimes forget that their allegiance to the liberal individual is also an allegiance with competitive capitalist economics, and that wherever there is competition, there are losers as well as winners" (25). Later feminist theorists challenged patriarchal identity constructions to a greater degree by deconstructing the binary hierarchies reflected in capitalist constructions of society.

Liberal feminists were also challenged by Marxist critics proposing the role of social background and different social apparatuses which are active in constructing our sense of self. Influenced by Hegel's attempts to historicize human existence and employing his dialectical model, Marx offers a new conceptualization of subjectivity, which accounts for the social influence. In the "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx claims: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their

consciousness" (21). This claim not only challenges the liberal understanding of a human being able to construct his subjectivity by hinting at the social forces constructing human consciousness, but also suggests the existence of a "meta-consciousness" – a "process through which one gains a critical awareness of … social belief that has been passed off as natural fact" (Hall 54-55). Marx started politicizing what was previously considered a personal strife of subjectivity construction. Moreover, Marxist theories encouraged the examination of the processes controlling social consciousness construction. Two other major theorists who have embarked on the study of these processes were Althusser and, later, Foucault.

Althusser is best known for his explanation of Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses which construct and control our sense of subjectivity. Repressive State Apparatuses are "the police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army…and above this ensemble, the head of State, the government and the administration (Althusser 137). Ideological State Aparatuses are more intangibly represented in the systems of education or religion, as well as other social groups that endow their members with allegedly natural and unchanging social beliefs and norms. The collaboration of these state apparatuses produces a subject in its true sense:

> In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means (1) a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. The individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order*

> *that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection,* i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection "all by himself." *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* (182)

Offering a variation of the classical point of view, Althusser differentiates between "Subject,"[24] referring to the central controlling ideological device (God, nationalism, social order, etc.), and "subject" as an individual unconsciously and automatically acquiring the individuality by following the prevailing social norms.

Psychoanalytic self

Apart from the more social view of subjectivity, another prevalent theory of subjectivity is based on contentious psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. The Freudian and Lacanian concepts should be examined through the prism of feminist psychoanalysts, in order to illustrate the attempts of feminist critics to revise the existing paradigms of psychology and, in turn, literary analyses. The early works of Freud outlined two main aspects of the human self: the conscious and the unconscious, which were later developed into a model composed of three parts: "Ich" (translated into English as the Ego), "Es" (the Id), and "Uber Ich" (the

[24] A related term is Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony" which refers to "the extent to which belief systems are thoroughly naturalized and deeply dominate the consciousness of individuals, who think they submit freely to the reigning economic and political system but who are more or less programmed to do so." (Hall 87)

Superego). The division was a useful one in as much as it allowed the theorists to break up the analysis of the self into more understandable parts. The discovery of the Id also brought the theorists' attention to the previously ignored unconscious, biological and irrational side of human subjectivity. These three terms "designate the sense of self that one tries to develop (ego or I), the drives that often run rampant within it (id or it), and the cultural censor we internalize (superego or over-I)" (McAfee 31). Although the Superego, which denotes the internalization of the social and cultural norms, and the Id, which entails the biological drives for pleasure, violence, self-protection, are comprehensible, what constitutes the Ego continues to be debated.

Obviously, Freudian psychoanalysis is more complicated than summarized here. For the historical period, Freud's theories were revolutionary, as they emphasized (in contrast to the Victorian emphasis on the rational, the ordered and the normal) "the developmental aspects of individual psychology and recognition of the powerful influence of the unconscious on conscious life" (Hall 60).[25] Freud's views on women's sense of self (or lack of it), their psychoses and their sexuality have had a detrimental effect on the way women have been studied and represented in science and literature. However, his major input in the study of subjectivity lay in his

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[25] It must be noted that Freud's psychological studies emerse in the historical period which is characterised by a more divided and speacialised interest in the social sciences. If previously the study of the self could be found in religious or philosophical texts, in late nineteenth century there appears to be a clearer subdivision and specialization of social sciences. An important sociologist to be mentioned is Emile Durkheim and his two works *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893) and *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), where he outlines the need to specialization in sciences of the time, and notes the crucial role of the sociology as the field which needs to organize the newly developing disciplines. Thus, despite its limitations, Freud's theories challenged the blind faith in the ability to rationally explain and govern human behavior and society.

isolation of the importance of familial contexts and the erotic desire in the development of adult sense of self:

> As the child moves through various stages in his/her early life, corresponding roughly to a gratification of desires associated with various bodily regions (oral, anal, and genital), frustrations and rivalries occur inevitably within the nuclear family, ones that necessitate a sublimation and redirection of desires into socially acceptable channels. (Hall 60)

Freud outlines how such issues as oral or anal or genital fixations (for instance, a fixation on sucking), pushed into the unconscious as a socially unacceptable behavior are reflected in adult behavior in more acceptable ways (for instance, when adults chew pens – an expression of an oral fixation). Moreover, the relationship a male child has with his mother, and the female child has with her father can alter the individual's sense of selfhood forever. Paradoxically, while Freudian theory of selfhood serves as a challenge to the Victorian understanding of rationality and control as the absolute, the control mechanism offered by Freud itself requires the consultation and direction of the psychoanalyst as the authority figure. As summarized by Jonathan Hart in *Interpreting Cultures*, in his discussion of recognition in Freud's theory, "Freud seeks objectivity, though his model sometimes betrays the unfortunate hierarchical tendencies that privilege the doctor and the male" (64). This hierarchy, not explicitly present in psychoanalysis, is damaging to social

studies and, in turn, literary studies, as it gives the power to the psychoanalyst or the critic (most frequently both positions preserved for males or the educated elite) to define knowledge, social roles and the processes of subjectivity formation.

The prominent French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901 – 1981) built on and criticized Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Lacan departed from his predecessor's notion of the psychoanalytic theory and the psychoanalyst as the ultimate guides:

> Psycho-analysis is neither a *Weltanschauung*, nor a philosophy that claims to provide a key to the universe. It is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject. It poses this notion in a new way, by leading the subject back to his signifying dependence. (Lacan 1981: 77)

Such view of the function of psychoanalysis is also reflected in Lacan's interpretation of the structure of the unconscious. Departing from Freud, who studied the unconscious as a sort of storage of unfulfilled desires, Lacan asserted that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Lacan 1981: 293). With Lacan, the emphasis of psychoanalysis shifts from social scientific to a more cultural and structural understanding. Lacan maps out a rather specific development of the self, which goes roughly through the realms of the imaginary, the real and the symbolic. In the imaginary realm, "the infant does not distinguish between the truth and fiction of its images, symbols and representations" (McAffee 33). The realm of the real is (similarly to Plato's cave theory) outside the imaginary and the symbolic, and it cannot be captured by the symbolic. The most significant phase in the development of the self is the symbolic. The famous mirror stage is the time or the moment when the

infant sees his own image in a reflection, and "the sight alone of the whole form of the human body gives the subject an imaginary mastery over his body… [one] which entirely structures his fantasy life" (Lacan 1991a: 79). The difficulty with Lacan's theory is that he shifts from literal to metaphoric interpretations of the mirror stage, but the important tension in the subject formation process is that the subject "only perceives the unity of this specific image from the outside, and in an anticipated manner. Because of this double relation which he has with himself, all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego" (Lacan 1991b: 166). The child perceives himself as an object, distinct from his surroundings, and only then moves to the understanding and formulation of his self.

However, in order to conceptualize the independent self, according to Lacan, an individual must cross yet another threshold. As the unconscious is structured like a language, the individual must enter the structure of the language. Lacan's term for this structure is the symbolic order – a way of communication and creation of meaning. It is only through language that individuals can create our selves: "the form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity… I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" (Lacan 1977: 85-86). Although language allows the individual to express his needs and desires it also brings about new conflicts as it is in itself unreliable. Thus, in the process of becoming a self, individual consciousness struggles for the sense of unity and security with the unreliable means of communication and meaning construction. Hart notes that "the male desire for unity and truth can be a fantasizing God", and "there is a discovery of male self-knowlede and truth through female otherness, but Lacan

denies the category of woman and therefore reveals the impossibility of such self-knowledge and truth" (Hart 65). Lacan's theories sustain the opposition of maleness and femaleness, and construct the woman as the other, which should be used as an object in the man's attempt to discover the unattainable self-knowledge and truth.

Sujet en procès

The problematics of Lacan's subjectivity formation theory are reflected in the controversial psychoanalytical-linguistic theories of Julia Kristeva. Kristeva's, like Lacan's, theories shift from literal to metaphoric. Kristeva's critic, Kelly Oliver tries to trace the controversial interpretations of Kristeva's work in her *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind* and manages to resolve the theoretical tensions in a productive manner. Oliver notes two strategies which Kristeva uses to bring the body back into structuralism:

> First, she [Kristeva] brings the speaking body back to signification by maintaining that bodily drives make their way into language. She developed the notion of the semiotic element in signification in order to bring the body back into the very structure of language…
> …a second, perhaps more interesting…tactic is to reinscribe language within the body, arguing that the dynamics that operate the Symbolic are already working within the material of the body and the presymbolic imaginary. (Oliver 3)

Kristeva's departure from Lacanian structure and her revision of Freud's conceptualization of the maternal role allows more agency and empowerment for the female principle in the process of self formation and socialization of individuals. The language of the drives and the body, according to Kristeva, functions according to the same structures as the symbolic:

> Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. (Kristeva 1984: 25).

Kristeva offers a view of indeterminacy for subjectivity formation. Moreover, her hazy notion of chora allows her to include the figure and the body of the mother as an inherent part of self development, as opposed to Freudian and Lacanian view of the mother as the cause for tension in the process of entering the symbolic order.

However ambiguous the notion of chora is in Kristeva, as well as in Plato, whom she borrows the term from, it introduces the maternal body into traditional

psychoanalytic theory.[26] Chora is an effective term encompassing the complexity of maternal experiences of pregnancy and birth (which are discussed more at length in the chapter on Motherhood), as it collapses the hierarchical binaries typical to signifier-signified structures. For Plato (in *Timaeus)*, chora refers to the process of the universe creation, which is "receptacle, unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted to such an extent that it merits 'not even the rank of syllable'" (Kristeva 1980: 133). The semiotic chora, as conceptualized by Kristeva, describes how the mother's body provides the orientation necessary for the infant's psychic drives.

Challenging Lacanian theories of subjectivity, Kristeva demonstrates how the chora and the maternal body[27] already have in themselves the logic of signification, thus prefiguring the Law of the Father. The two processes essential for the logic of signification are negation and the identification, which are essential to subjectivity formation.[28] Kristeva describes "a maternal prohibition which precedes any paternal prohibition, that regulates what goes into and comes out of the infant's body; eventually the mother weans the baby by denying or prohibiting the breast altogether"

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[26] The psychoanalytic theory, as well as the views of its individual theorists, such as Freud or Lacan, has, for good and for bad, influenced the social sciences, cultural and literary studies alike. Worse, its biased and discriminatory views of gender roles have been reflected in literature, and, in turn,echoed in social and political structures. Thus, the inclusion of the feminine principle through the maternal into the discourse, although arguably essentialist (see Grosz, Butler, or Stone), limiting (Grosz, Gidal or Leland) and anti-feminist (Jones, Stone, Kuykendall) is nevertheless a significant step in female empowerment.

[27] *Chora* can mean and is sometimes translated as "womb or receptacle, but Kristeva doesn't seem to mean that it is just a space; she says it is an articulation, a rhythm, but one that precedes language" (McAfee 18).

[28] Tracing the negation and identification back into the *chora* has tremendous consequences for the scientific discourse initiated by Freud and Lacan, according to whom it is the father who initiates the negation and identification through the Oedipal phase and introduces the infant into the structure of language and subjectivity.

(Oliver 4). Both the infant's body and his/her relationship with the mother are operating according to the logic of negation already on the most biological/bodily level. Kristeva terms this process "abjection" and defines it as the process during which the infant begins to "separate itself from others in order to develop borders between "I" and other" (McAfee 46). Problematically, Kristeva illustrates this symbolic process of border development with very graphic and "real" examples:

> Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation and, still further down, spasms in the stomach... Along with the sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; ... "I" expel it. But since that food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. (Kristeva 1982: 2-3).

The boundaries between the symbolic and bodily disappear in the process of the self identifying and negating what it does not consider part of oneself. The abject, the rejected, the excluded is never fully driven out, but continues to challenge the borders of selfhood. In reminiscence of Freud, the abject remains in the unconscious

threatening the understanding of the "proper" self. Literature, however, "is a means of surviving abjection," and "a way of naming this unnamable aspect of existence, the otherness withing the self" (Nooy 183). Abjection is also closely related to the notion of the mother's body.

The most significant act of abjection in the process of becoming a fully functioning self is the abjection of the mother. Although abjection functions already in the imaginary realm, pre-dating the Mirror phase and the Law of the Father, the subjectivity cannot form until the child abjects the mother: "in order to become a subject, the child must renounce its identification with the mother; it must draw the line between itself and her" (McAfee 48). The line between the mother and child is not that easy to be drawn, as the two bodies have been interdependent and the binary discourse does not allow the conceptualization of such a complex relationship. The mother and her body are perceived as the child's first love, as his/her first most familiar home, and is, therefore, difficult to denounce. At the same time, it is essential that it is denounced in order for the subjectivity to form. Although Kristeva's abject is similar to Freud's notion of repression, they differ in an essential way. Freud notes the possibility of repressing the "improper," whereas Kristeva's abject "remains on the periphery of consciousness, a looming presence" (McAfee 48). The maternal abjection is a "constant companion of consciousness, a longing to fall back into the maternal chora as well as a deep anxiety over the possibility of losing one's subjectivity" (McAfee 49). Moreover, Kristeva offers a new notion of the "subject on trial" or "subject in process", two English terms to translate her ambiguous French *sujet en procès.* As McAfee summarizes, "Instead of a model of the self that is stable

and unified, Kristeva offers us one of a self that is always in process and hetereogeneous. The self's affective energies continue to destabilize any given self-understanding. Moreover, we are also affected by the people around us, especially the people we love" (McAfee 41-42). To summarize, Kristeva offers a feminist reexamination of Freudian and Lacanian theories of subjectivity. Her notions of chora, and abjection, functioning in the rhythms of identification and negation, demonstrate the existence of logic in the pre-symbolic phase. The infant's relationship with the mother's body and the concept of the abject mother allow Kristeva to elevate the maternal onto the same plain with the paternal in terms of its significance to subjectivity formation. The view of the changing and heterogeneous self asks for a more open examination of women's subjectivities.

Becoming woman

As discussed previously, starting with Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* the notion of a fixed and clearly defined subjectivity, specifically, subjectivity of women, has disappeared. Post-modern critics, namely Judith Butler and Gilles Deleuze, have introduced challenging concepts of a fluid sense of self, which cannot be defined, completed, or exist as static. Post-modern subjectivity theories are quite contentious and difficult to summarize, because they rely on their predecessors, and challenge them at the same time. They ask questions instead of providing answers, and when these answers are provided, they strike one as ungrounded generalizations, which violate the rules of logic and scientific discourse. Sarah Salih, in her critical survey

Judith Butler, describes Butler's works in a way that could be applied to a variety of post-modern subjectivity theories. Salih claims that these works "are part of a process or a becoming which has neither origin nor end; indeed, in which origin and end are rejected as oppressively, perhaps even violently, linear or 'teleological' (i.e. moving towards a specific end or a final outcome)" (Salih 3). Some of these theories do succeed in living up to their mission of post-modern deconstruction, in a sense that they deconstruct the theories, postulates or interpretations they propose. Once a critic manages to suspend the need for clearly grounded, explained and proven theories, an invigorating view of the world can emerge.

Judith Butler is mainly preoccupied with an analysis of a gendered subject, searching for how a subject becomes a subject and how the notions of gender influence that becoming. Butler's first major preoccupation is the question of "whether subjectivity necessarily rests upon the negation of the 'Other' by the 'Self'" (Salih 20). In her first publication *Subjects of Desire*, Butler draws heavily on the works of Hegel and Derrida, and develops the notions of *différance* and desire. Extending the Hegelian theory of the united subject, based on oppositions, Butler claims "the subject's 'ambition' to achieve absolute being is an impossibility. If the subject is constructed in language and if language as theorized by Derrida is incomplete and open-ended, then the subject *itself* will be similarly characterized by its incompletion" (179). Continuing her theory of gender subjectivity in *Gender Trouble,* Butler critically analyzes different feminist theories, and constructs a peculiar definition of gender:

> In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence… In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. (Butler 1999: 33).

Butler frees the notions of gender, sexuality and subjectivity from philosophical and linguistic restrictions. Although gender subjectivity is presented as a process; Butler does not build the illusion of the freedom or independence as part of this process. According to her, this process is always already regulated by political, cultural and moral principles. Moreover, gender signifies the "apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established" (Butler, 1999: 11). In this process of establishing gender, identity and sexes, the notion of the body is an important factor.[29] To summarize, Butler's conceptualization of gender identity reminds us of a never-ending story, where the subject which is defining, is always already a definition, a cultural construction in the process of becoming.

The concept of subjectivity as a process, and, more specifically, the process of *becoming woman* is crucial to the provocative theories of Gilles Deleuze. Although Deleuze is not considered to be a feminist thinker, his conceptualization of feminine identity formation is a significant addition to feminist subjectivity theories. Deleuze's

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[29] Butler analyzes the concept of the body in her *Bodies that Matter: on the discursive limits of "sex."* Body, sexuality and desire, as social modes/expressions of selfhood, will be discussed in greater detail in the separate chapter.

notion of *becoming* is reminiscent of the Ancient Greek (particularly via Heraclitus) understanding of the world as an ever-changing entity. However, the biggest and most challenging departure from the Platonist idea of the world as flux occurs when Deleuze deconstructs the belief in the possibility of an evaluative centre, a foundation of becoming, and the "original" source. Claire Colebrook, in her critical analysis of Deleuze's theory, skilfully summarizes:

> Platonism is overturned with the affirmation of becoming and simulation; there is no longer an origin or being that then becomes or goes through a process of simulation. In a reversal of Platonism we do away with the foundation of being, acknowledging the immanence of becoming (becoming as all there is without ground or foundations). It does not just mean *valuing* becoming over being. It means doing away with the opposition altogether... there 'is' nothing other than the flow of becoming. (Colebrook 125)

Deleuze goes further than Butler in a sense that he emphasizes not only the constructed (becoming) nature of our constructions (becomings), but takes away any possibility of a definable subject. Deleuze leaves the reader in an insecure position, for the theory of becoming nullifies the means of defining security, position, knowledge and the very verb "to be." Generally, Deleuze's complicated view of

becoming-woman[30] is not satisfying to feminists, because he does away with the question of *difference*. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari claim:

> But what does becoming-imperceptible signify, coming at the end of all the molecular becomings that begin with becoming-woman? (...) What is the relation between the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal? A first response would be: to be like everyone else. (279)

Politically, the urge "to be like everyone else" is problematic not only to feminists, but to minority groups as well. Philosophically, Deleuze's views of ultimate decentralization, asubjectivity, and asignification are problematic, because they still rely on a source of knowledge. In other words, in order to define "asubjective", one relies on the definition of "subjective". In order to claim legitimately that one is like everyone else, one needs to assume the positive of an evaluative centre or margin, which, according to Deleuze, is an impossibility in the world of becomings.

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[30] The term "becoming-woman" is tied into other Deleuzian terms, such as "becoming-animal" and "becoming-intense". To challenge the notion of a man-being, Deleuze claims that "In order to really think and encounter life we need to no longer see life in fixed and immobile terms. This means that thinking itself has to become mobile and to free itself from the fixed foundations of man as the subject. Becoming other than man requires becoming-woman or becoming-animal." (Colebrook and Fensham, *Understanding Deleuze*, xx-xxi).

While the notion of becoming-woman is problematic, as it is presented as an opposition to man-being, it is further complicated by Deleuze's borrowings and re-interpretations of the terms from physics and political studies alike:

> Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man? First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian… In this sense women, children, but also animals, plants, and molecules, are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming woman. (Deleuze & Guattari, 291)

Deleuze's theory should probably not be held up to the laws of logic, but it does strike the reader as inconsistent (yet, maybe this inconsistency is a part of becoming).[31] Once again, the division into minoritarian and majoritarian subjectivities calls for an evaluative stance, which, according to Deleuze, is impossible in the fluid decentralized world of becomings. On the one hand, Deleuze criticizes, albeit in confusing and indirect ways, the patriarchal system dividing the world according to the subjective being of Man; on the other hand, he takes up a

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[31] Characteristic of those influenced by Maurice Blanchot (such as Derrida), Deleuze's writing is more "anti-theory" than theory in the traditional sense (as a framework for analysis). Blanchot's theory of literature claims literature escapes definition, which is perhaps echoed in Deleuze's claim that identity escapes definition.

concept, which is part of that system (Woman as a fluctuating other in the process of becoming) and celebrates it as a way of becoming.

Despite the complicated nature of Deleuze's and Guattari's theories which cannot be captured and much less explained in an introduction this short, their main value to the analytical study of women's literature lies in the concept of becoming. The concept of the self, which is un-fixed, undefined and unfounded and cannot be measured, opens the doors for multiple interpretations and experimentations of feminine identities and offers a possibility of empowerment which is not measured by living up to established gender roles or by violating them through unorthodox behaviour. Moreover, the theory of becoming subjectivity allows the inclusion of maternal and corporeal becomings of women into conceptualizations of self.

Chapter 2: Maternal subjectivities

"If evolution really works, how come mothers only have two hands?"[32]

Milton Berle

And where are we to find the imaginary and symbolic of life in the womb and the first *corps-à-corps* with the mother? In what darkness, what madness, do they lie abandoned?

Luce Irigaray

A mother to be: the challenges of feminist motherhood theory

Motherhood continues to be an unsettling issue for feminists despite the multiple facets in the development of the feminist movement. Real life motherhood experiences, as well as medical and philosophical discourses surrounding these experiences, still generate some anxiety for feminist scholars. On the one hand, pregnancy and birth giving constitute women as different from men; yet, on the other hand, a categorization of women as naturally maternal (building on their "natural" biological, emotional, psychological, and social characteristics) has influenced the creation of an essentialist conceptualization of women's selves. Thus, feminists

[32] Although humorous, Milton Berle's comment is a fitting to this chapter, because he identifies an inherent difficulty with the conceptualization of maternity as a purely biological and thus essentialist concept. In addition, the articulation of an overwhelmed mother and the image of caring hands that end Berle's joke also makes for an appropriate reference to the religious image of the ever-suffering and ever-nurturing mother.

struggle between the need to embrace the difference offered by maternity and the desire to reject the essentialist notions of women's identities constructed around their ability to give birth and raise children. Along with the evolutionary or biological conceptualization of womanhood, there has been a corresponding Judeo-Christian characterization of women as caregivers.

Combined, because science and religion are valued patriarchal institutions,[33] the powerful ideological discourses surrounding women's biology and women's spirituality have had an essentialist influence on women's subjectivity, serving as a point of contention for first[34] and second wave feminists. The struggle to voice maternal experience distinguishes the work of Kristeva, and such voicing is a struggle because of the traditional (especially Biblical) and continued (the Virgin Mary as a maternal model) dominance of phallogocentric discourses in religious and medicine. Certain Canadian and Lithuanian authors attempt to posit some variance in the corporeal experience of motherhood, by acknowledging a cyclical (and superimposed) relationship of life and death, and by exploring an alternative conception of maternal creativity in body and in words.

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[33] Although religion and science have been at odds in their differing explanations of various phenomena, as will be examined here, they historically combine in certain ways when justifying the mother as a natural part of women's life.

[34] The term first wave feminism was coined retroactively, when second wave feminism started being used to refer to a more modern feminist movement. First wave feminism refers to the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which was most concerned with issues of suffrage for women. The most prominent first wave feminists were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and others. Maggie Humm, in her *Modern Feminism*, proposes to see the 18th century, with the publications of Mary Woolstonecraft, as the beginning of the first wave feminism. Humm includes feminists like Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, and Simone de Beauvoir in the list of most prominent feminists of the first wave.

Conception: feminist waves

Already Simone de Beauvoir, in her *The Second Sex*, questioned the essentialist definitions of women as primarily mothers. Martha McMahon, in her *Engendering Motherhood: Identity and Self-Transformation in Women's Lives*, summarizes: "feminism has attempted both to validate the hitherto devalued identities and experiences of being a woman and mother and to reject and transcend the restrictions and oppressiveness of those identities" (9). The development of the feminist movement has mirrored this tension, with some first wave feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century embracing their supposedly feminine selves, which encompassed mostly emotional character traits, such as empathy, the desire to care for sufferers, and the need (or even destiny) to suffer. Socially, such women figures and the myth of the suffering mother have had a positive influence as they were presented "as solutions to a variety of social problems – including vice, disease, alcohol abuse, poverty, and social decay" (McMahon 9). Some of the best Lithuanian women writers of the early twentieth century, such as Žemaitė, Bitė, Šatrijos Ragana, have been considered to be the best women writers precisely because of the social function of their writing. Ironically, most of them were childless, but they acted as the mothers of the nation, or, at least, of national literature.[35] Carol Smart, in her *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood*

[35] Žemaitė was an unhappily married woman writer who wrote about the sufferings of village women due to the arranged marriage system. The sisters Pečkauskaitės writing under the pseudonym of Šatrijos Ragana, wrote short stories about social injustices, as well as the problematics of women's personal and public aspirations.

and Sexuality, provides a more detailed analysis of women's involvement in social work in the later nineteenth century, demonstrating how "social work both offered a challenge and provided a sense of community, especially to the unmarried women undertaking it" (79). For first wave feminist political activists, the fight for women's rights centered around improving the social status of women. Hence, the disturbing (disturbing for the society of the time) rhetoric and activities of birth control clinics led by Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes. The activism of these feminists commenced the deconstruction of the traditional motherhood roles, whereby women's worth was in their ability (not choice) to bear children. Contraception or other means of birth control were unwelcome, and yet, women were considered to be at fault if the family had too many children.

Second wave feminists[36], especially those of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated a substantial paradigm shift as they recognized motherhood as "one of the prime means by which women were excluded from full participation in social and economic life" (McMahon 9). In the broader sense, the feminists of the second wave, such as Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Susan Brownmiller, Susan Griffin, Andrea Dworkin, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, are concerned with "women's difference to oppose the 'legalities' of a patriarchal world" (Humm 11).[37] Noting how the

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[36] Second wave feminism is conditionally said to have started around 1960s and was mostly preoccupied with greater political equality for women, as well as the inclusion of women's minority groups into the movement. The inclusion of visible minority groups coincides with the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s in the United States.

[37] There exist different delineations of the feminist movement, and the use of the terms of first and second wave feminism is a choice of convenience. Elisabeth A. Flynn, for instance, in her *Feminism Beyond Modernism*, divides feminism into modern, anti-modern and postmodern: "I also associate modern feminism with Western Enlightenment rationality and empiricism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis and suggest that postmodernists and postmodern feminists do not reject rationality and

essentialist association of women with motherhood has restricted them to the private sphere of the home, defined them as less capable to function in the public sphere, and assigned women with pre-defined notions of self, second wave feminists marginalized motherhood. Re-examinations of women's maternal roles and duties, developing alongside re-examinations of heterosexuality, have made some positive impact on the status of women worldwide, as it drew attention to marital rape, domestic abuse, and birth control.[38] Feminists like Andrea Dworkin or Catherine MacKinnon, amongst others, introduced the concept of choice in relation to motherhood. Departing from the previously celebrated idea of women's duty to be a wife, a mother, to suppress her needs and aspirations for the sake of others, the emphasis shifted to women's ability to choose whether to be a wife, when to have or not to have sexual relations, to have or not to have children (abortion, the contraceptive pill), and, lastly, the ability to pursue her personal interests. Correspondingly, the relationship between writing and mothering has changed as well:

> Modern feminist perspectives elevate the activity of writing above the activity of mothering, privileging men's projects over ones that have been traditionally reserved for women and calling for relief from the

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science but, rather, critique it. I relate antimodern feminism, in contrast, to the Romantic movement with its emphasis on nature, spirituality, and irrationality and with some late-twentieth-century intersubjective approaches to language." (Flynn, 4) Although these orientations will not be analyzed extensively, they are useful for tracing the historical paradigm shifts in feminism.

[38] A significant and convenient form of contraception coincides with second-wave feminism, since the birth control pill first appears in the early 1960s and thus influences the issue of choice in motherhood for second-wave feminists.

> onerous task of raising children so that women can get on with the most important work, contributing to public life. Antimodern feminist ones either emphasize the damaging effects patriarchal culture has had on mothering in the case of radical feminism or emphasize the importance of women's work and mothering in the case of cultural feminism. Postmodern feminist perspectives on writing and mothering attempt to find ways of enabling women to deal with the contradictions and complexities of the two activities. (Flynn 78)

This changing relationship between mothering and writing (although not presented in an open contradiction) will be seen in the works under analysis. Generally, third wave feminist analyses embraced different women's differing qualities and experiences as valuable. In *Engendering Motherhood,* McMahon says:

> The challenge facing feminist analysis became one of valuing women's social capacity to care and/or their biological capacity to give birth, while resisting having these capacities considered definitive or "essential: or best in what it is to be a woman. (10)

Thus, an analysis of motherhood as a social, personal, and scientific phenomenon continues to be a challenge for feminist critics. Post-modern feminist philosophy has experimented with maternal discourse in an attempt to conceptualize maternity in ways that account for mothering experience from women's point of view, and in a

language that does not position women as either idealized and unattainable, or as reproductive machines and more fundamentally biological, than spiritual. This task, according to some feminists, is made nearly impossible if we continue using phallogocentric language. The challenge is further complicated by the different levels of socio-political developments of different countries.

The analysis of mothers' subjectivity is, in a way, a response to different theorists of subjectivity, who have used the "scientific" data about motherhood discussed above. The discourses of subjectivity, dominated by male authors and male subjectivity, have excluded, to a large extent, the maternal aspect of subjectivity. As women were considered inferior to men, and as subjectivity construction requires rational and spiritual capacities, which women supposedly lack, childbearing experiences fail to receive adequate attention by scholars of subjectivity. Julia Kristeva, a contentious feminist critic, has attempted to bring the maternal into phallogocentric philosophical discourse. Although Kristeva's relationship with feminism is controversial (she herself dismisses feminism and is not considered feminist enough by some feminist critics), her views of the maternal function nevertheless enrich psychoanalytical studies and the traditional Lacanian theory of subjectivity, which posits the paternal function in the center of subjectivity formation.

Kristeva brings in the maternal aspect by using two main strategies: one, by arguing that the bodily is present in language and, two, by finding the language in the body. According to Kristeva's analyst Kelly Oliver:

> ...the body that sets up and threatens the Symbolic (at the same time that it threatens it) is the maternal body. The maternal body *prefigures* the Law of the Father and the onset of the Symbolic. What Kristeva calls the "maternal function" contains both a negation and an identification that precede Lacan's mirror stage. This is to say that both are already operating within the maternal function prior to the subject's entrance into language. (*The Portable Kristeva* 3).

The body, in general, and the maternal body, in particular, are key in Kristeva's understanding of subjectivity, as she maintains that bodily drives have their function in the structure of the language. At the same time, Kristeva posits that the dynamics, operating in the symbolic, are biological and are working already in the imaginary phase in the material of the body. Thus, according to Kristeva, the processes of negation and identification, which the infant undergoes while in the womb and during birth, operate according to the logic of negation in the semiotic body prior to the subject's entry into the symbolic order.

Tracing fictional manifestations of maternal women's subjectivity creating, the following chapter will compare the works of some Canadian writers from the 1960s and 1970s with the ones of rather modern (1990s and 2006) Lithuanian writers, demonstrating the complicated relationship between feminine subjectivity and maternal experiences. The study of the works will trace the constraints of spiritual, medical and intellectual discourses of femininity demonstrating the lack of a positive model of maternal subjectivity. The works chosen for analysis represent different

historical moments for two different countries and yet the works bear similarities. The social situation in the Lithuania of early 1990s reminds one of that in Canada in 1970s, especially in terms of family values, the view of women's roles as mothers, and the exposure to birth control choices and methods. Gabrielle Roy' *La route d'Altamont,* Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women,* as well as the Lithuanian Vanda Juknaite's *Šermenys* (*The Wake*) and Ugne Barauskaite's *Dešimt* (*Ten*) do not all (except for *Desimt)* deal exclusively with motherhood, and are therefore more useful in providing insight into the role of the maternal experience (or the perception of the maternal experience and role) in women's subjectivity formation.

The selected women writers, like certain feminist scholars, are faced with the same dilemma of using phallogocentric language in the conceptualization of motherhood, which, as a result, is always already lacking. To start with, it is difficult to value women's capacity to give birth, as McMahon suggests, because the very structure of language (Lithuanian and English in the following analysis) does not have sufficient means to express the collage of motherhood's experiences (which are not limited to the spiritual, biological and intellectual). To start with, the language describing the spiritual aspect has a separate jargon, a distinct style and vocabulary as opposed to, for instance, the scientific description of biological processes and medicinal practices. Pregnancy, birth and mothering, at large, are an experiential mixture of these different facets that are being appropriated by the pregnant woman as she negotiates the pre-existing socio-economic constructions of maternity[39].

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[39] Although the mother's experience is individual and highly personal, the new mother is also simultaneously a complicated public subject, whose life-style and behavior become sites of public

Traditionally, the language of the spiritual is more elevated and more "pure" than medical language. Moreover, the biological aspects of womanhood (such as menstruation) or maternity are considered dirty, as something to be rejected or cleansed. Julia Kristeva, in her *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* analyzes the association of maternity and defilement:

> If language, like culture, sets up a separation and, starting with discrete elements, concatenates an order, it does so precisely by repressing maternal authority and the corporeal mapping that abuts against them. (72)

The language of binary oppositions constitutes maternity, based on its bodily elements, as dirty, disorderly, and unwanted. As a result, the maternal element and the maternal authority of creation become devalued. A pregnant woman is not merely a biological being with an embryo in her womb. The biological state of being pregnant impacts her spiritual and psychological state – she feels empowered or restricted by her ability to give life to a new human being; she also has to cope with the new social role of being a mother. Moreover, once a woman becomes pregnant, the public/private boundaries that define society collide, as the embryo she carries in her most private parts is at the same time a part of the public – a future member of society. These collisions of traditionally separate fields continue to complicate the

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interest. Moreover, she needs to navigate the biases for or against motherhood which exist in her social environment. For instance, for an intellectual or business executive getting pregnant may signify that she is more "biological" than "logical".

discourses of maternity as well as societies' reactions to motherhood and related experiences. The binary thought and language structure curbs conceptualization of maternity.

The post-modern feminists, such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray discussed in this chapter, have attempted to articulate a discourse for describing maternal experiences. Despite their empowering aspects, however, the theoretical musings of these French feminists fail to provide a positive and experiential concept of mother's sense of subjectivity. In part, this may be due to the overwhelming religious mythology surrounding western womanhood.

Contractions: the Mythical Mother

The spiritual facet of maternal experience offers a woman as an alienated, fragmented, and rather negative model of subjectivity. In the traditional Western Christian and Hebrew philosophical paradigm and prevalent social discourse, the mothering experience, starting with the first experience of menstruation, positions women in a much inferior position than men occupy in discourses of religion, science, and literature. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, such treatment of women can be traced back to the myth of creation, where humanity is punished for Eve disobediently eating an apple from the tree of Knowledge, and "Eve is told by a castigating God that she and all women will suffer for her sin through the curse of painful childbirth" (Tharp 20). The binary philosophical paradigm started by Aristotle, "separated the sexes by associating men with the soul, reason, and the

mind, and women, quite pejoratively, with the body and birthing" (Tharp 20). Therefore, the female body has been seen as the site and the symbol of sexuality and mortality, which, in turn, made women inherently sinful and dangerous for those patriarchal ideologies constructing religious and social views. According to Biblical laws, women's biological functions make her unclean:

> The Lord said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, if a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying; she shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days." (Leviticus 12:1-5)

Paradoxically, women's nature is defined not by what the processes of her body do to it, but by the way society perceives those processes. Although menstrual and post-natal bleeding serves the function of cleansing the womb, the Christian perception (which is, in turn reflected in contemporary Canadian and Lithuanian culture) positions a menstruating woman and a new mother as a danger to the order and spiritual cleanliness of society.

Out of the three types of women presented by the Bible – that of the wife (Eve), the mother (Virgin Mary), and the witch/lover (Mary Magdalene) – the myth of the Virgin Mary or Virgin Mother is the most positive representation of women and, particularly, of mothers. Arguably, the church celebrates motherhood by portraying the Madonna holding baby Jesus in her arms, breastfeeding him, and holding him in her embrace when he is taken off of the cross; in these ways, the church demonstrates the importance of mothers as care-takers and sources or nourishment. Although the Virgin Mary is significant in the Christian tradition purely because of her function as Jesus' birth-giver, she is stripped of any means of empowerment through the process of birth. As noted by Tharp:

> When adopted by men, the experience of birth no longer symbolizes women's power, mystery, eroticism, or creation, and the message is quite clear: an asexual Madonna is the only "conception" of woman that is celebrated in the Judeo-Christian religion. (21).

The most mysterious and empowering aspects of womanhood, namely pregnancy and giving birth, were considered dangerous by formative patriarchal societies. Not only women who gave birth (and were thus capable of changing society), but also women who assisted in birth, brought instability to the social hierarchy. The Middle Ages, the apex of the fear of women in Europe, are characterized by pan-European witch-hunts, which were the main means of controlling the empowerment of women and

continued up to the seventeenth century[40]. Women who did not fall under the pre-defined categories of asexual and restrictive motherhood, as well as women healers and midwives, were described in the manual documenting[41] the discovery, the hunting and the torturing of witches, entitled *The Malleus Maleficarum.* In this text, according to Tharp, midwives are described as women alleviating labour pains, "thus contradicting God's intended curse on womankind" (Tharp 23). The fear of women's empowerment through birth manifested itself in public ritualized burnings and tortures, which paved the way to supposedly scientific explanations of women's sexuality and their role in the process of conception as inferior to men. The element of pain, which has traditionally been presented as a form of punishment, complicates any attempts for the positive conceptualization of birth. Despite the few positive studies of mothering and womanhood, such as Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book, or the Whole Art of Midwifery Discovered, Directing Childbearing Women How to Behave Themselves in Their Conception, Breeding, Bearing, and Nursing of Children* (1671), the prevalent medical discourses presented women as dirtier, less active and, therefore, inferior to men because of her corporeal nature.[42]

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[40] Post-modern feminists as well as contemporary feminist minded women embrace the natural childbirth, in a way, bringing back the midwife tradition. Marina Benjamin, in *A Question of Identity: Women, Science, and Literature* notes "it is not surprising that the natural childbirth version of birth should appeal to women writers who are trying to give an account of the experience from the woman's point of view: the natural childbirth movement for the first time stressed the importance of a woman's *state of mind* as crucial to the success or failure of her labor; the woman's subjectivity, not just her objectified body, became the center of the process" (75).

[41] Documenting history here is clearly not without bias, and thus demonstrates the deep-seated and powerful nature of such perspectives.

[42] Maccallum-Whitcomb and Tharp offer a more detailed discussion of the representations of motherhood in early medical history in *This Giving Birth: Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing*, noting how the medical discourse pays more attention to male interpretations of the cultural signification of motherhood as opposed to describing women's experience of childbirth.

The Western Christian discourses of maternity have found their way into post-modern feminist theory. In her *The Powers of Horror* and other works, Kristeva offers a significant re-examination of the role of motherhood in Western culture. One of the problematic representations of motherhood, which Kristeva revises, is the traditional religious account of motherhood through the cult of Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary, which, on the one hand, can be seen as an empowering symbol for women, is simultaneously, on the other hand, a limiting symbol with embedded hierarchical power relations. The representation of motherhood through this deceptively empowering role of the Virgin is a means of ensuring the Law of the Father and guaranteeing paternity. The function of the mother is a threat to the Symbolic patriarchal order in a few ways. As summarized by Oliver:

> Her (the mother's) *jouissance* threatens to make her a subject rather than the Other against which man becomes a subject. In addition, she not only represents but *is* a strange fold between culture and nature that cannot be fully incorporated by the Symbolic. (*Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind,* 50)

The experiences of pregnancy and giving birth position women in the meeting place of culture and nature, the signifier and the signified, which, potentially, could be conceived as a position of empowerment and agency. Yet the agency in maternity is a highly contested term. Although women, to a large extent, can choose when to become pregnant and when not to become pregnant, the choice and the result are

never absolute. In other words, there always is a chance of becoming pregnant even when one does not want to. Similarly, women are not in control of starting the birth process, and yet, the birth requires a large effort (agency) on the mother's part in order to be successful. In the analysis of Kristeva's work on motherhood, Elisabeth Grosz refers to the abandonment of agency and the identity: "…maternity is a process without a subject… The process of 'becoming-mother' is distanced from subjectivity and identity. Pregnancy occurs at the level of a fusion and movement of the organism (not the subject)" (*Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* 79). Even when a woman, due to her ability to give birth, is rewarded, at least symbolically, with a position of empowerment, she gains agency that positions her on a fluctuating border between the one who is performing an act and the one onto/in/through whom the act is being performed.

Returning to the power of the Virgin Mother myth, Kristeva draws attention to the possibly mistranslated term "virgin," explaining that it comes from "the Semitic term that indicates the socio-legal status of a young unmarried woman" (Kristeva, 1976a 236-37). The pregnancy of a young unmarried woman is even more threatening to a patriarchal society, as it is not controlled by the social structure of marriage. The unmarried woman's pregnancy is a remnant of the matrilineal society, where the child is named after the mother, not the father. The image of the Virgin mother allows the patriarch (real or imaginary) to control the threat, as the Virgin is impregnated by the Word of the Father. Moreover, the cult of the Virgin mother replaces the sexed and private body of a mother, as her conception is pure, and she serves the son of God (and humanity by extension) by providing nourishment, care

and suffering with him. The joy of the mother can only be felt through pain and suffering. As the violent explosion of the natural and cultural, which occurs with pregnancy, cannot be explained, it is suppressed by articulating an ideal and purely spiritual relationship between mother and child. The Virgin cult has influenced the traditional conceptualizations of women's roles in society, as well as influenced the gendering processes to emphasize the mother's servitude to society (the Virgin's body is used by the Father to produce a saviour for humanity) and her suffering. In the existing paradigm, the identification with the Virgin mother enables women to enter the Symbolic order:

> An identification with the Virgin is an identification with the mother and the Symbolic at the same time. It is an identification with the perfect, immortal, holy Mother. But it is also an identification with the Word that marks and defines her. She is, after all, a symbolic mother. By identifying with the Virgin, women can identify with the mother within the Symbolic order. (Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, 52)

Such a virginal discourse of maternity limits the empowerment of mothers and erases the multi-faceted relationships a mother has with the child, the society, and, eventually, her own subjectivity. Mothers who identify with the Mother Virgin symbol of maternity have a predefined role of a servant and sufferer without the possibility of incorporating it into her subjectivity. The narrator of Ugnė

Barauskaitė's recent novel *Dešimt (Ten)* ridicules the Christian representation of women on the whole:

> Dar baisiau tas Jėzus su moteriškėm elgiasi. Davė jis vyrui pavyzdį: save. Vyras nesidulkina, minta dangiška mana – ir viskas liuks, kaip iš akies luptas jėzusiukas. Moteriai davė kitą pavyzdį: Mariją, motiną savo. Kad žmoniją daugintų. Na kaip tu, moteriške, padauginsi žmoniją, nepadarius fiti miti?..Taip ir išeina: lyg ir klauso moteriškė Dievo, bet lyg ir nuodėmė baisi! Vyrai, žinoma, čia niekuo dėti... Moteris, kuri pati nori – paleistuvė. Moteris, kuri nenori – nesveika. Paleistuvę apmėtyti akmenim, nesveikąją – išprievartauti. (Barauskaitė 96)[43]

The narrator, describing the ten[44] months of lunar calendar (an interesting departure from the traditional medical nine solar month calendar) of her pregnancy is trying to come to terms with different social representations of motherhood and womanhood on the whole. For her, the Virgin Mary role model is not a sufficient source of

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[43] Jesus was even worse with women. He gave himself as men's role model. The man doesn't fornicate, eats manna from heaven – and everything's cool, he's like little Jesus. The woman was given a different model to follow – his mother Mary. So she'd multiply humankind. But how will you, woman, multiply humanity without doing hokey pokey? That's how it works: the woman, although following God's command, commits a horrible sin at the same time! Men, of course, have nothing to do with it…
The woman who wants to do it is a slut. The one who doesn't – she's sick. Throw rocks at the slut, and rape the sick one.

[44] Ten is also significant in religious discourse for the Ten Commandments, identifying a list of religious and moral rules written by God on two stone tablets and given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Within the Judeo-Christian context then, because of the power of the written word in religion and law, it is no wonder that contemporary feminists place a high value on women's writing.

empowerment for women, as it only validates holy motherhood – the pregnancy by the word of the father as opposed to sexual intercourse. The line between symbolic and the real does not exist for the narrator, and, therefore, she is only more troubled by the hypocritical and restrictive representations of motherhood in the Christian doctrine.

However, more empowering spiritual representations of godly mother figures do exist, such as demonstrated in Gabrielle Roy's stories. Gabriele Roy is considered to be a writer on the threshhold between French and English literatures. In Roy's biography, entitled *Gabrielle Roy: a Life*, Fraçois Ricard notes:

> To this day, Gabriele Roy is probably the only truly 'Canadian' writer in the federal sense of the word, meaning the only one whose work genuinely transcends the language barrier and is embraced unreservedly by the two communities as their own—and by the two literary establishments (468)

Althouh the question of women is important for Roy, according to Socken, it is rarely "the central theme of her stories or novels" (201). *La route d'Altamont* deals with the theme of women very gently spinning the tale of women of different generations. Feminine subjectivity in this collection of stories truly embodies the process of subjectivity formation, as they are repeatedly questioned by the encounters between mothers and daughters, travel and landscape, and individual and familial.

Motherhood in "Ma grand-mère toute-puissante" or "La route d'Altamont " is spiritually intimate and relational. Although these conceptualizations of maternal subjectivities do not account for the biological aspects of motherhood, they are refreshing in their holistic and relational view of mothers. For instance, the young narrator of Gabrielle Roy's " Ma grand-mère toute-puissante" retells of her excitement about her grandmother's ability to make a doll. Although making a doll is not comparable to giving birth to a child, in this short story, doll-making serves as a symbolic act of the mother figure creating a life. The creative act inspires the grandmother in the way that the girl had not seen before: "il lui vint dans les yeux une petite lueur que je n'y avais jamais vue, tout à fait extraordinaire, comme une belle petite clarté s'allumant en un endroit qu'on avait pu croir désaffecté, désert et reculé" (Roy 17).[45] Reminiscent of Dr. Frankenstein's endeavour, the grandmother and granddaughter exhibit more power than women have when they give birth: the little girl can choose what kind of little person she will make. When confronted with the choice of hair color for the doll, the girl hesitates over her "cruel choice." Witnessing the making of her doll makes the girl feel humble, as opposed to her initial devaluation of the grandmother: "Je devenais humble, très humble devant elle, devant la majesté de son cerveau, l'ingéniosité de ses mains, cette espèce de solitude

[45] "a little glimmer came into her eyes that I had never seen there before; it was quite extraordinary, like a light suddenly kindled in a place one had believed abandoned and overgrown" (This and the following translations are taken from Gabrielle Roy's *The Road Past Altamont* translated by Joyce Marshall).

hautaine et indéchiffrable de qui est occupé à créer" (Roy 23).[46] For the girl, the symbolic act of creating a doll becomes an overpowering spiritual experience:

> Il m'apparaissait qu'il n'y avait pas de limites à ce que savait faire et accomplir cette vieille femme au visage couvert de mille rides. Une impression de grandeur, de solitude infinie m'envahit. Je lui criai dans l'oreille:
>
> -Tu es Dieu le Père. Tu es Dieu le Père. Toi aussi, tu sais faire tout de rien.
>
> ...Longtemps il me resta dans l'idée que ce ne pouvait être un homme sûrement qui eût fait le monde. Mais, peut- être, une vieille femme aux mains extrêmement habiles. (Roy 27-30)[47]

The creative act, witnessed by a small girl, serves as a sort of introduction to women's roles as mothers. Unable to comprehend the intricacies of the Christian creation myth, the girl awards the woman with the highest place in the hierarchy – that of the creator. Unaware of the bodily realities of mothering, the narrator embarks

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[46] I was becoming humble, very humble indeed before her, before the grandeur of her mind, the deftness of her hands, the sense of exalted and mysterious solitude that surrounds all those who are busy with creation.

[47] It seemed to me that there was no limit to the things this old woman with the face covered with a thousand wrinkles could accomplish. A sense of grandeur, of infinite solitude, came over me. "You're like God," I wept into her ear. "You're just like God. You can make things out of nothing as he does."
...For a long time I was haunted by the idea that it could not possible be a man who made the world. But perhaps an old woman with extremely capable hands. (Roy 14-16)

on the road to becoming a woman through the positive conceptualization of maternal creative power in the rhythms of life.

The very last story in the collection, "La route d'Altamont," the melancholic musing that could be characterized as a symbolic search of one's subjectivity through the tangled roads of memory, offers a cyclical, holistic and spiritual view of mothering. During the conversation with Christine, the mother recounts an unwilling change she experienced during her lifetime, when, "peu à peu, de jour en jour, je le vis se modifier sous l'effet d'une invisible et attentive volonté sans bornes" (Roy 226).[48] This physical change from daughter to mother is a re-enactment and reversal of the birth process, and provides the strongest sense of understanding of the woman's subjectivity:

> Ah, c'est bien là l'une des expériences les plus surprenantes de la vie. A celle qui nous a donné le jour, on donne naissance à notre tour quand, tôt ou tard, nous l'accueillons enfin dans notre moi. Dès lors, elle habite en nous autant que nous avons habité en elle avant de venir au monde. C'est extrêmement singulier. Chaque jour, à présent, en vivant ma vie c'est comme si je lui donnais une voix pour s'exprimer. (Roy 227)[49]

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[48] little by little, from day to day, I saw my face alter as if as the result of an invisible, determined and boundless will.

[49] Ah, that is certainly one of life's most surprising experiences. We give birth in turn to the one who gave us birth, when finally, sooner or later, we draw her into our self. From then on she lives in us just as truly as we lived in her before we came into the world. It's extremely singular. Every day now as I live my own life it's as if I were giving her a voice with which to speak.

The memory of the mother, her voice, her aspirations, and her behaviour, is a symbolic communion. The imaginary birth and consumption of the mother figure provides an opportunity to voice the myth of the mother. This sort of maternal subjectivity is a person, an experience, an act and a becoming all in one. The other, which is the imaginary mother, and the self become one singular experience. Interestingly, right after the dialogue about this coming together (which is a very experiential and relational perception of one's subjectivity), the two women discover the hills and the mother's Altamont road, which symbolizes the mother's childhood, as well as her dreams. Intertwined with the traditional view of spirituality, the subjectivities of the mothers and daughters in *La route d'Altamont* are spiritual, relational and strongly experiential, and in this way they create a holistic maternal myth.

A more negative view, although similarly focused on the social and spiritual perception of motherhood, the mothers in Vanda Juknaitė's sombre novel *Šermenys (The Wake)*, struggle in silence with the controversial burdens of being mothers and familial supporters. Juknaitė, who is currently a politician and a prominent Lithuanian writer, deals with the painful transition which women experienced during the transitional times from Soviet to Post-Soviet rural Lithuania. Jurate Sprindytė, in her article „Ugniaspalviai lapiukai" comments on the reserved language and powerful expression in this collection: „Santūriais, sutramdytais žodžiais apsakyti kaimo moterų ir jų vaikų likimai, tokie, kokie jie buvo, rūstūs, negailestingi. Be jokių

modeliavimų ir interpretavimų, pats gyvenimo nuogumas."[50] Similar to Roy's characters, the characters in Juknaitė's collection interact with other women, yet Juknaitė does not allow these characters to develop, instead giving the reader snapshots of women at difficult moments of their lives – such as giving birth or caring for the dead. As part of the national literature building process, Juknaitė positions the average women within the home sphere of the universal myth. Dubovijienė observes: „Kaip moteriškosios epistemos į Mirties ir Gyvenimo sampratą įsipina ugnis, vanduo, žemė."[51] Juknaitė's women struggle to protect their femininity and Christian and pagan spirituality so typical for a Lithuanian village.

In a spiritual and symbolic sense, the theme of motherhood in *Šermenys* develops in parallel to the theme of death. This novel centers on different female characters involved in attending the wakes of their neighbours and friends in the village. The narrator reviews the lives of women mainly defined and described through their familial experiences as mothers and wives in an impartial way. One of the most negatively portrayed characters is the owner of the Plytinė, who is believed to have supernatural powers and the ability to harm people. She is presented as a bad wife and a bad mother. When her husband is killed, she does not bury him or mourn: „Visą amžių raganaudama, ji buvo patyrusi: jei likimas pareikalavo aukos, atiduok ją lengva širdimi, negailėdamas, kitaip jis panorės tave dar kartą pamokyti"(Juknaitė

[50] Using reserved language the author described the fates of rural women and their children, just the way they were – merciless and severe. With no modeling or interpretations, the very nakedness of life.
[51] Like the feminine epistemologies, fire and earth are intertwined with Death and Life.

18).[52] Her son ends up in a psychiatric hospital and his mother does not even come to visit him. Then, many years later, when she finds the son and brings him back, she is said to have become more peaceful, as though having performed her duty as a suffering mother:

> O plytinės šeimininkė buvo rami, kiek galėjai spėti iš jos bejausmio veido, rami ir patenkinta. Jai atrodė, kad visa susitvarkė, gyvenimas pagaliau įėjo į vėžes. Juk vis tiek tai buvo jos vaikas, jos kūnas ir kraujas, toks tikras ir apčiuopiamas, kad ji pagaliau galėjo būti rami. (Juknaitė 23)[53]

Although late, the mothering experience seems to be the only way for this woman to realize herself. Throughout the novel, women are portrayed according to how well they perform their supposedly biological (maternal and wifely) functions. Like Kristeva's Virgin Mother, the mothers in *Šermenys* realize their fate through suffering, and the only relief they get is through children.

Nevertheless, motherhood can be an empowering, spiritual and uplifting experience. The dominant Christian doctrine offers a passive, suffering driven image of a Virgin mother, which negatively influences the formation of feminine subjectivity. Mothers, like the ones in *Šermenys*, suffer and serve their husbands,

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[52] Being a witch all her life, she had learned: if fate has demanded a sacrifice, give it easily, without hesitation, otherwise it will want to teach you a lesson again

[53] And the owner of Plytine looked peaceful, as much as you could tell from her feelingless facial expression, peaceful and satisfied. It seemed that everything had worked out in the end, and that life finally got into a rhythm. After all, he was her child, her flesh and blood, so real and tangible that she could finally be peaceful.

children, and society; in this way, they erase the possibility of an empowered subjectivity. However, maternal subjectivity can also be conceptualized as a holistic, cyclical and positive myth of the mother-daughter relationship, where the daughter discovers herself by giving birth to her own mother and, in turn, appropriating her into the relational and changing self. Apart from the spiritual aspect of maternal experiences, motherhood inevitably involves the corporeal elements, in the form of the sexual act of conception, the pregnancy experience, the birthing process and the nurturing of a child. Traditionally, the images of the bleeding, leaking, aching, expanding and shrinking body parts have no place in the spiritual discourses, and, in this way, instigate another obstacle in the becoming of the maternal subjectivity.

Crowning: the corporeal maternity

Women have traditionally been associated with the corporeal, dark, irrational and unruly side of philosophical hierarchies (see Cixous or Irigaray). This association has resulted from the difficult to understand and disturbing processes of the women's bodies. Yet, through pregnancy and birth, women have a chance to experience and feel their bodies become a different and yet remain the same corporeal entity. Sadly, the dominant discourse of maternity does not offer positive means of appropriating the corporeal experiences of a mother. Generally, the woman's body, which can rarely be stripped from her maternity, is trapped in her cycles of impurity. Hence, Hélène Cixous, in "The Laugh of the Medusa," urges women to rediscover their bodily drives:

> What's the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallogocentrism, hasn't been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a…divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? (309)

Traditional western philosophical paradigms are only able to situate the corporeal as the inferior opposite of the spiritual. The bodily and the irrational elements have to be controlled, restricted and rationalized. Sadly, scientists are still struggling in their attempts to control pre-menstrual syndrome, menopausal mood swings or the unpredictability of birth. Apart from being philosophically ignored, the mother's body has been taken away from women in other ways. In terms of retelling, mothers struggle with the demeaning language and vocabulary signifying the corporeal and the maternal. The bodily discourse is practical, specific, often impersonal, which always fail to grasp and express the complicated experiences of a mother. Practically, feminists argue that the development of science has alienated women from their birthing bodies – medicine treats them as objects, reproductive machines or sick patients.

In other words, medical discourse still offers a demeaning representation of the conception, pregnancy and birth. Due to the binary nature of language, it is difficult for the mother to retell her bodily, spiritual and intellectual perceptions, as these three are clearly separated from each other. Moreover, even in the field of corporeal discourse (the medical and scientific), she cannot express herself in terms and in ways that are empowering. Michele Lise Tarter, in "Bringing forth life from body to text: the reclamation of childbirth in women's literature," details the historical development of the medical maternity theories and concludes: "Clearly, women must reclaim their bodies and their stories, for millions have suffered from the scientific models of implied failure, the dualistic strategies of waste and decay, and the utter fragmentation of their bodies split off from their souls" (28-29). Even modern medical discourse fails to offer a more empowering and more objective view of feminine sexuality and childbearing. In her analysis *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, Emily Martin studies how reproductive biology discourses echo the cultural stereotypes restricting women's empowerment. Women's bodies are presented and treated as machines that break down, when a miscarriage occurs, or function properly, when a child is born. In this way, by positioning maternal bodies as machines, there is a continued bias towards women's roles as mothers. Interestingly, contemporary medical discourse celebrates spermatogenesis and devalues egg production:

> The terminology used includes negative words such as "degenerate," "lack," "weakened," "deteriorate," "denuding," "debris," and "slough,"

> terms all connoting failed production on the part of women. And yet, when spermatogenesis is described, positive words such as "remarkable," "amazing," and "sheer magnitude" are used to detail the process. (Tarter 27)

Analyzing the discourse in more detail, feminist theorists note how the very description of conception mirrors our cultural biases, representing the egg (the feminine element) as the passive one and the sperm (the masculine element) as the active one. According to Tarter, theories, such as Shatten and Shatten's "The Energetic Egg," emphasizing the "collaboration" of the egg and the sperm would present women as agents, as opposed to passive victims and would allow women to reclaim their bodies (Tarter, 28). This short overview of the prevalent so-called scientific discourse describing motherhood demonstrates how complicated the task of recovering the value of mothering is. The struggle to regain the value of motherhood is hindered by traditional discourses. As Gerda Lerner observes in *The Creation of Patriarchy*: "Traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a "scientific" framework, have been regarding women's subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable" (16). Thus, maternal narratives and the theories of maternal subjectivities need to articulate alternative scientific and religious discourses that allow for an empowered subjectivity formation.

The birth stories in *Šermenys* illustrate the destructive controversy surrounding the corporeality of mothers. Women are restricted to their biological maternal function and they do not feel their worth until they give birth under even the

most difficult and dangerous conditions. Yet, society, in these cases represented by the medical sector, does not endow them with a sense of value, but, instead, makes these mothers feel degraded and unneeded. Women in *Šermenys* give birth despite dangers to their health, and the experience of birth giving allows women to *experience* their subjectivity. Yet, the mothering experience is depicted as institutionalized, alien, and cold. When Milda, another female character in the novel, goes to the hospital to stay through the last stages of her dangerous pregnancy, her experiences are characterized by coldness, lacking human touch and support. Even the doctor's touch is inhumane: „Gydytoja pakyla iš užstalės, ir prie nuogo kūno prisiliečia ne rankos, šaltai ir skaudžiai priglunda apžiūrėjimo instrumentų geležis" (Juknaitė 156)[54]. The setting of the hospital ward is cold and gray, the women in the ward are living in pain, and the anticipation of birth naturally contrasts with the reality of death. Alina, another patient, loses her baby and is deemed unworthy to be a mother: „Ja govorila. Govorila. Siniaja kak kurica i ješčio chočet materju byt" (Juknaitė 157)[55]. After the miscarriage, Alina is brought back to the ward looking like she is dead:

> Parvežta, paguldyta į paklotą lovą, Alina neverkia. Guli išsekusi, nejudėdama.

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[54] The doctor stands up from behind of the desk, and the naked body is touched by cold medical instruments rather than the hands.
[55] I told you. Told you. Blue like a chicken and wants to be a mother.

- Inkštė, girdėjau, - kelintą kartą kartoja. – Kelias minutes buvo gyvas. (Juknaitė 157)[56]

The knowledge of her child living for only a moment works as though it redeems her as a mother. Birth and death go hand in hand in this ward. Alina lies in her bed like a dead person, her face blue, her lips all white, and she weeps only in her sleep. The mothers in *Šermenys* are typical for Soviet patriarchy, where the mother, resembling the ultimate sufferer Virgin Mother, serves as a guide through the passage between life and death. The old women of the village prepare the dead for the wake and lead the wake – they serve as initiators of the dead into the after-life. The young women, despite the images of women suffering for their husbands and their children, continue to perceive and re-enact their role as birth givers and care-takers by getting pregnant, giving birth and struggling to raise children in the alien world. Theoretically, these mothers are the mythical mothers – the wives and the servants of the nation. They are initiators into the symbolic; they balance between life and death; they experience their chora and, yet, practically, they remain subordinate to the patriarchal order represented by their alcoholic husbands and hospitals.

Šermenys, however, offers a more detailed and personal description of the pregnancy birthing process, which resemble Kristeva's abstract notion of the chora. Milda, the protagonist, has to stay in the hospital throughout her pregnancy. The description of the institution of hospital is contrasted with the personalized and mythical experiences of women becoming mothers. The painful pregnancy is

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[56] When she is brought back and put into her bed, Alina is not crying. She is lying there tired, motionless.
He whined, I heard him, - she keeps repeating. – He was alive for a few minutes.

conceptualized with the help of the images illogically intertwined in the woman's imagination: the noise in Milda's head compares to the sound of the hundreds of clocks ticking in the clock repair shop; the noise transforms into the heartbeat felt in her head, resembling the swinging pendulum of the clock, which transforms into a tree swinging in the wind. The woman's perception of her self expands beyond the borders and experiences of the body, beyond the alien medical empowerment (the ability to keep the baby when there is the danger of miscarriage) and removed far away from any religious or inter-personal relationships available for women in the dominant discourse. The only attempts to describe the experience situates the woman's subjectivity in Kristevian chora:

> Diena po dienos, savaitė po savaitės, sausis, vasaris, kovas... Milda nebejaučia abiejų rankų pirštų, plaštakų. Skausmas tarsi atsiskiria nuo jos, ūždamas plaka tuščioj erdvėj, kūnas kas dieną sunkėja ir grimzta žemyn į minkštą tamsią gelmę, į tąsią tylą. Vieną naktį ten, tamsioj gelmėj, kažkas krusteli, ir per visą kūną iki paširdžių nusirita banga, tarytum jos viduje būtų apsivertusi šilta žuvis. (Juknaitė158)[57]

There is no clear sense where the woman's body begins or where it ends. The pain terminates any objective means of feeling the boundaries. The mother is both inside

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[57] Day after day, week after week, January, February, March...Milda cannot feel the fingers, then both her hands. Pain separates from her and flies away *beating* in the empty space, the body is becoming heavier and heavier every day and sinks down into a soft dark depth, into a viscuous silence. One night, in the dark depth something moves, and a wave goes across the whole body reaching the heart, as though a warm fish stumbling over inside her.

her womb and outside: in the realm of the night, the indescribable realm where birth and death collide, where time loses its meaning. Paradoxically, the pain and despair (the sense of death) reawaken in her dream as „sielvartinga, žudančia, vedančia iš proto žaluma“[58] (Juknaitė 159). The mother's subjectivity expands to encompass much more than the painful rhythms of her pregnant body, the baby developing inside her and her relationship with the other women – it stretches over the green fields, the wheat and the trees in Milda's childhood village. Even in her helplessness, Milda becomes a sort of a Mother Nature. However, Juknaitė's mothers constantly feel a sense of a lack of agency, a lack of empowerment in the process of succumbing to the trials of history.

Amidst the changing political situations (the beginning of the Soviet Union in *Šermenys* and the beginning of independence in "Stiklo Šalis") mothers described in Juknaitė's fiction are marked by death. In *Šermenys*, women see the dead off into the other world, whereas in „Stiklo šalis", the narrator, the mother of two children, constantly struggles with death. Unable to get over the post-partum depression and struggling to keep her newborn alive, the woman loses any sense of selfhood or relationship with the other people. Her husband reproaches her for the second baby; her doctor only wants to have an affair with her, and she is left within her role of the suffering mother – the only one responsible for keeping her baby alive. The relationship with her baby (both inside her womb and when he is born) is what defines her being:

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[58] painful, killing, mind boggling greenness

> Artumas juos abu ramino. Prisilietimu jie sužinojo vienas kitą esant. Iš pradžių tai buvo vos juntamas krustelėjimas, lyg tamsia gelme būtų nuslydęs šilkinis suraitytas siūlas. Paskui jis brūkšteldavo iš nežinios staigiai ir švelniai kaip žuvis. Pagaliau, lyg išdykaudamas ėmė belstis veržliais minkštais kojyčių smūgiais. (Juknaitė186)[59]

Paradoxically, the relationship expressed through the sense of touch keeps both the mother and the child alive. Sleep and alertness are tangled up, as death repeatedly touches the life of the young family. While the mother figure symbolizes and embodies life for the sick baby, she also violates life by killing the newborn puppies. The short story „Stiklo šalis" is abundant with symbols of whiteness, water and cold, but one of the most powerful symbolic experiences is the description of the mother drowning the puppies:

> Uždegė vonioje šviesą. Šuniukai buvo gyvi. Plūduriuodami po vandeniu jie be perstojo yrėsi kojytėmis. Rožinės jų nosytės buvo jau melsvos. Moteris staiga paėmė nuo vonios grindų kilimėlį, uždengė šuniukus ir užsimerkusi prispaudė juos prie vonios dugno. Vonios dugne niekas nebejudėjo.

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[59] The closeness calmed them both down. They knew each other's being through the touch. At first it was a barely tangible movement, as though a silk thread winding through the depth of darkness. Then he'd browse through from the unknown quickly and gently like a fish. Finally, as though playing around, he started kicking with his soft little feet.

> Staiga iš raukšlės išniro vienas šuniukas ir lėtai, bet stipriai irdamasis letenėlėmis, ėmė kilti į viršų. Nebeslegiamas kilimėlio jis yrėsi kaskart vis stipriau, sparčiai kildamas į vandens paviršių. Jis turėjo visa, ko reikia gyvenimui: atkaklumą, kantrybę ir jėgą. Moteris privalėjo suteikti jam galimybę. Tačiau ji vėl panėrė rankas po vandeniu, patraukė kilimėlį į dešinę. (Juknaitė 197-198)[60]

The setting resembles the womb, the place of the life-giving chora. The water, typically symbolizing life, is the symbol of death here. The puppy, moving towards the surface of the water, resembles the baby struggling to life through the birth canal. Strangely, the killing of the puppies marks the moment of rebirth for the woman. It is not through birth, through sexual experiences, or through her place in society, but through the ability to take away a life that the woman finds the power to go on with her life.

Death is also a powerful mythical presence for the subjectivity of the narrator of *Dešimt.* The image of people getting older and dying recurs throughout the narrative as a contrast to the sexualized, consumable, and eternally young feminine body. For the narrator, like in *Šermenys*, death and motherhood go hand in hand: „Mes savos mirčiai. Moters įsčios, kuriose užsimezga gyvybė, ne mažiau gleivėtos

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[60] She turned on the light in the bathroom. The puppies were still alive. Floating under the water, they kept moving their legs. Their rosy noses were already blue. The woman suddenly picked up the mat off the floor, covered the puppies and, with her eyes closed, she pushed the mat to the bottom of the bath. Nothing was moving at the bottom of the bath.
Suddenly, one puppy emerged from under the mat. Slowly, but powerfully the puppy was moving his paws. Without the weight of the mat over him, the puppy was rowing harder and harder quickly moving towards the surface. He had everything needed for life – persistence, patience and power. The woman had to give him a chance. But she put her hands into the water and moved the mat to the right.

nei mirties drebučiai" (Barauskaitė 143)[61]. In the capitalist world, where the narrator struggles to find her place as a mother, life is symbolized by the sexualized feminine body. Ironically, although the feminine body has become symbolic of life because of its maternal function, the body marked by pregnancy and birth is not considered sexual or life-giving:

> Nuogybės kultas klesti, kol kūnas atrodo gaivus ir tinkamas kergtis. Visa kita – mirtį primenanti bjaurastis. Raukšles, randus ir celiulitą reikia pridengti. Trikdo mus ir medicininis kūniškumas: vamzdeliai venose, burnoje ir šlapimkanaly kelia pasibjaurėjimą. Moters tarpkojis, iškėtotas ant gimdymo stalo – baisus. Memento Mori. Štai todėl turtingos ir seksualios damos mielai nusiperka Cezario pjūvį. (Barauskaitė 143)[62]

The narrator has a multifaceted view of death. As described above, death is perceived as an illness, an imperfection of the body, a lack of sexuality – all of which accompany the pregnant woman. Because there is no discourse but that of death and illness to describe the processes of pregnancy in positive terms, birth is intertwined with death. The words which could be used to describe a mother's changing body are

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[61] We are buddies with death. A woman's womb, where life starts, is not less damp than the jello of death.

[62] The cult of nudity flourishes while the body looks fresh and suitable for copulation. The ugliness, reminding us of death is a totally different story. Wrinkles, scars and cellulite need to be covered up. We are also puzzled by the medical corporeal: the tubes in veins, in the mouth or in the urethra are disgusting. The view of the woman's legs opened on the birthing table is horrifying. Memento Mori. That's why rich and sexy women buy themselves a C-section.

negative words, and they, in turn, reproduce the problematic social attitude towards a mother's body.

For the narrator of *Lives of Girls and Women*, the encounter with death is a significant marker in her process of becoming a woman. Del's first sexual experience with Garnet French is situated in a familial context – it happens right after Del meets Garnet's family, and despite Del's hopes for "a ceremonial beginning," it strikes her as a very practical and by no means enjoyable act: "I put my hand to my wet leg and it came away dark. Blood. When I saw the blood the glory of the whole episode became clear to me" (Munro 249). Del describes her sexual initiation sarcastically – only seeing blood after sexual intercourse, which resembles a wrestling match more than a love relationship, does she understand "the glory" of the experience. Feeling she needs to mention her experience to somebody, Del retells the episode as a cruel and forceful act of death:

> I said to my mother, "There's blood on the ground at the side of the house."
>
> "Blood?"
>
> "I saw a cat there yesterday tearing a bird apart. It was a big striped Tom, I don't know where it came from."
>
> "Vicious beasts." (Munro 249)

Although it seems reasonable to explain a blood stain by referring to a killing, this passage also has a double meaning. A cat, symbolizing the masculine power, tears

apart the feminine element symbolized by a fragile bird, in this way invoking a sense of death. Such an encounter with death, even when it is imaginary, reminds the body of the boundaries of its life, the boundaries that can only be controlled when they are known; they are abjected in order to ensure survival. Paradoxically, only after losing her virginity does Del feel that she gains a different status and, arguably, a sense of empowerment. Such narrator development resembles what E.D. Blodgett refers to as freedom in his final chapter "Fiction as Destiny" in *Alice Munro*: "Freedom is precisely what is discovered as lost in these stories, and the discovery, as Munro delicately suggests, resides in how the separate fictions are shaped by the narrations of memory, fantasy, and imagination" (141). Although Del's empowerment is not radical in its nature, the control she posseses over the situation, her memory and the way she retells the invented story to her mother, presents her as freed after losing her virginity.

Del's mother, like the mother figures in the other works discussed here, is the one who explains (or tries to explain) death. She has an untraditional and rather progressive view (for her society) of life and death. Addie, Del's mother, presents death not as a border, a limit or a finality in a traditional sense, but in a more holistic sense, as a part of a process:

> If we weren't thinking all the time in terms of persons, if we were thinking of Nature, all Nature going on and on, parts of it dying – well, not dying, changing, *changing* is the word I want, changing into something else, all those elements that made the person changing and

> going back into Nature again and reappearing over and over in birds and animals and flowers…(Munro 53)

Rebelling against the male-centered religion which stresses a hierarchy beyond which one falls down to hell or moves higher to the heavens, Addie conceptualizes life as a cycle, a continuation – a concept reminiscent of mother nature.

Like death, a feared concept in society, femininity and motherhood are not positive experiences. The mother figure and maternal experiences are too complicated to be explained by organized language. Mothers are marked by sexual desire, and, at the same time, embody the mythical mother, who is feared because of the incest taboo; they are creators expelling unwanted bodily liquids – simultaneously recreating and defiling. Irigaray, in her "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" recognizes ambiguity and "darkness" associated with maternity:

> The relationship with the mother is a mad desire, because it is the 'dark continent' *par excellence.* It remains in the shadows of our culture; it is its night and its hell…
>
> The maternal function underpins the social order and the order of desire, but it is always kept in a dimension of need. Where desire is concerned, especially in its religious dimension, the role of maternal – feminine power is often nullified in the satisfying of individual and collective needs. (Irigaray 35-36)

Precisely because of its multi-faceted nature, motherhood is a danger. It potentially endows women with too much power. A pregnant body is sexual and a-sexual at the same time. The narrator of *Dešimt* describes this complicated perception of her pregnant body: „Šiaip man neapsakomai patinka, kaip dabar sunksta mano krūtys. Darosi tokios apvalios ir standžios, o speneliai plečiasi, tamsėja. Nepaprastai seksualu. Tačiau gimdyvės krūtys... gimdymo akivaizdoje mintis apie seksą nelaikšė, ji purvina ir šlykšti, nesveika ir iškrypusi!" (Barauskaitė 85)[63]. Yet, there is no socially acceptable discourse, even in a modern, post-radical feminist society to discuss sexual maternity without fear or prejudice. Irigaray powerfully summarizes:

> The womb, unthought in its place of the first sojourn in which we become bodies, is fantasized by many men to be a devouring mouth, a cloaca or anal and urethral outfall, a phallic threat, at best reproductive. And in the absence of valid representations of female sexuality, this womb merges with woman's sex and a whole. There are no words to talk about it, except filthy and mutilating words. The corresponding affects will therefore be anxiety, phobia, disgust, a haunting fear of castration. (Irigaray, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" 41)

[63] I really like how my breasts are becoming heavy now. They are becoming round and hard, and the nipples are expanding and becoming darker. Really sexy. But a pregnant woman's breasts… in the face of birth-giving the thought about sex is untimely, it is dirty and disgusting, unhealthy and perverted.

Irigaray adds to Kristeva's cultural criticism discussed before. As the maternal is perceived merely based on its biological function, it is associated with the negative bodily element in the hierarchy of binaries. In the absence of acceptable positive ways to articulate maternal experiences, the resulting conceptualization of women's selfhood is fragmented, marked by frustration and a sense of guilt. With the urge to speak the silenced mother's body, Irigaray argues for a more intimate and celebrated relationship between mothers and daughters, and emphasizes relationships between women as opposed to heterosexual relationships:

> We must give her new life, new life to the mother, to our mother within us and between us. We must refuse to let her desire be annihilated by the law of the father. We must give her the right to pleasure, to *jouissance*, to passion, restore her right to speech, and sometimes to cries and anger.
>
> We have to discover a language which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak the corporeal. (Irigaray, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" 43)

In essence, the women must give birth to their mothers and to the mythical notion of the mother. This concept must be freed from negative attributes, negative characterizations and the binary paradigm overall. This binary phallogocentric philosophical paradigm robs the maternal power of the personal element, the unique

relationship between the spiritual, logical and the corporeal, because the linguistic means available do not allow expressing the fluid complexities of the maternal experience. Although Irigaray does not exemplify such language, the novels and short stories examining the relationships of women to their mothers and their daughters; the relationship of mothers to their sexual bodies; the turmoil of feelings experienced by pregnant or birthing mothers serve as attempts to find such a language, or, at the very least to voice the previously silenced experiences of mothering.

Conclusion

Despite the abortive discourses of medicine and spirituality, the creative power of maternity and the complicated cycle of life and death that accompanies women's experience of motherhood struggles to take life through the words of certain women writers. Trapped in the binary philosophical paradigms, the maternal subjectivity is not only subjectivity going through a process of physical, emotional and hormonal changes, but also subjectivity on trial by religious, medical, social and political discourses. Maternal subjectivity should be termed inter-subjectivity, as it is always already in-between discourses. To give a practical example, in the very beginning of 2008, the Lithuanian government re-opened the discussion on legalization of abortion in the country. This discussion begins at the crucial question of whether the mother's subjectivity is separate from the baby or not. In *Women Writing Childbirth: Modern Discourses of Motherhood,* Cosslet observe: "Our culture has no way of formulating the intersubjectivity between mother and

foetus/baby without reducing one to the object of the other" (8). Feminist critics need to articulate an alternative notion of maternal inter-subjectivity. If success is the creation of a sustained alternative to prevailing discourses of maternity, invariably, the voicing of maternal experience will meet varying successes. Although a handful of critics and writers may posit interesting reflections on the maternal experience, this chapter is not overly optimistic about the revolutionary power of such alternatives. The writers and their works studied here are steeped in western patriarchal societies and repressed by phallogocentric language. Contradictorily, it is the very appropriation of such language that both submerges and escalates women's experience. Because this chapter favours a relational approach to understand the experiences of women, a serious attempt at a concrete conclusion undermines the complexity, variance, and flux of maternity. On the one hand, the critics and characters studied here must establish a relationship with themselves, in order to explore their internalization of dominant scientific and religious values and in order to reflect upon their own experiences within such institutions and their persuasive ideologies. On the other hand, critics and especially characters must deal with the institutional and social manifestations of such forces existing within and through those individuals they have relationships with, such as other critics and characters. Nevertheless, as the opening quote by Milton Berle indicates, despite the contradictions between the pairing of science and religion, and because of the power of phallogocentrism, women must continually struggle to use a limited number of hands in order to bring life to some parts of their multifaceted maternal experience.

Chapter III: Speaking the Female Body

> Reality, representation and the word-definition. Wholeness for a woman is knowing that she is all of this when, with her entire body, she stretches out majestically toward life.
>
> (Nicole Brossard)

> the truth is, that's woman's lot. it's what you learn to accept, like bleeding and hysterectomies, like intuition and dizzy spells – all the ways we don't fit into a man's world.
>
> (Daphne Martlatt)

Introduction: Where is she?

Although at first glance the connection between language and the body may seem like an odd mix of two unrelated fields – linguistics and biology – has actually become increasingly intertwined within feminist discourse, bridged, in particular, by the interrogation of gender socialization. Language has been used to reflect, shape, and change socialized norms in at least two significant ways: linguistic propriety and linguistic gender bias. In the pursuit of gender neutral language, the latter is spoken

of more readily, but, here, it is necessary to begin with the often overlooked (and preceding) concept of general linguistic propriety.

First of all, there is the general cultural division of proper and improper language. Typically, improper language is the language about the body and bodily functions, the discourse that describes something personal, something that needs to be kept away from public – this is the language of embarrassment. It is generally considered improper to talk about flatulence, burps, defecation, and other bodily functions. It is also considered improper to speak of sexual functions and sexual intercourse. As language relating specifically to female processes, menstruation and pregnancy are also considered unclean and thus relegated to the private. On the one hand, language censorship within a culture serves to protect social purity, however real or imagined; on the other hand, linguistic attitudes have done damage to social discourses and the social position of marginal groups, such as cultural, racial, and gender minorities. More than simply politeness, linguistic decorum has also had a troubling association with social superiority. The underclass, the ethnic, and woman have all been associated with dirtiness, physical, moral, and spiritual, whereas those in power have flirted with self-definitions of purity. The post-modern realization of (and obsession with) the power of language in reality construction has led to an increased awareness of language use as something political.

The contemporary concern for fairness in language is a significant cross-cultural phenomenon, closely related to the establishment of a "clean" public society, a world marked by equality and fairness. Gender neutrality in international English is also a symptom of the major global changes at the end of World War II, which, can

be said to signal the era of "posts," the era where humans leave the failings of the past and progress to a better present, untainted by the dirtiness of world wars and other former evils. The era of "posts" in the realm of global politics, include the following: post-Imperialistic, post-Civil rights, post-Women's rights, post-Cold War, post-Aparthied, post-Multicultural and Post-Human Rights. These "posts" are linguistic references to public notices of legal documents officially recognized by most of the global economy's governmental institutions. Put another way, multiculturalism is a legal act; it is not only a legal act, but, its status as a legal literature should not be taken lightly.

Interestingly, the nation which is most closely identified with multiculturalism today, Canada, arrived at such documentation through a series of preceding acts, meetings, doubts, and debates. In 1947, the Citizenship Act opened the possibility for greater acceptance for immigration as a nation-building enterprise, as opposed to the more traditional methods of genocide, which of course received its own UN document in 1948, and, after the threat of subjugation to the Germans, Italians, and Japanese, slavery (and its colonial variants) also becomes unpopular.[64] In previous notions of nationhood, often, a particular people had primary right to a landmass, either because they lived there for a very long time (such as the ever-popular claim of "since the beginning of time") or they killed off and/or subjugated anyone else who lived in or around a certain landmass. Although Canada flirted with these older methods of nation creation earlier in its history, after a series of conventions and acts

[64] Although officially outlawed today, slavery is also still being debated as a legal concept, because of issues surrounding slave labour, illegal immigrant labour, and, the reluctance for former slave-owning nations to issue formal apologies (which, of course, are feared to lead to reparations).

related to employment equity and anti-discrimination, after the fight for freedom and equality against the fascists, after witnessing Great Britain's decolonization, and after watching the US struggle for civil rights, in 1971, Canada chose the less bloody idea of a multicultural policy, but it was not until as recently as 1988 that the Canadian multicultural act was passed. By 1988, however, Canada was largely considered a multicultural country, with its major metropolitan centers being home to generations of Canadians whose ethnicities could be traced to various nations around the world.[65]

Since independence, Lithuania has been going through a series of document additions, a process heightened by its recent inclusion in the European Union, but Lithuania is far from reaching a balance between legal documentation and social reality, something that is not perfect, but more observable in Canada.[66] Leaving these specific examples of linguistic and legal documents aside, it is important to reiterate that these documents exemplify an international concern with the power of language and identity formation. It is important to note that it also was not until the late-1980s and early 1990s, the ending of Apartheid, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of newly independent Eastern European countries), that political

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[65] Canada's native population, or the First Nations people are also part of Canadian metropolitan centres; however, because of the historical institution of reservations, or land set aside for native Canadians to live, a significant segment of Canada's original inhabitants are literally and often politically outside of the Canadian mainstream.

[66] For instance, Canada has a multicultural act and also is home to many cultures, which are afforded a relatively equal quality of life or, at least, the right to such a life. In Europe, as the plight and problematic status of Roma indicates, there are still many hurdles to pass through. Also, there is the difficulty with the place of a visible minority in the EU. On the one hand, the EU is building its identity based upon historical European-ness, which means white Christian or Protestant; hence, Germans and the English are no longer enemies, but linked by their common geographic proximity. On the other hand, Europe has a large population of non-white, non-Christian, and non-Protestant ethnic groups, which are not European by the current geographic definition utilized by the EU. Because Roma are also considered outsiders (if not primitive and savages) throughout Europe, it seem as though racial prejudice is an underlying problem. Fortunately, Human rights documents promise to guide such tensions.

correctness[67] becames a major part of the English lexicon. The linguistic concern with correct and sensitive gender terms in everyday public life is related to a similar concern in feminist literary theory. At times, the movement towards a less biased language may seem like a rush towards an ideal or clean language, even when its speakers may be far from it; nevertheless, this academic movement falls under the post-document era concern with the "language shapes reality" connection.[68]

Language, perception, and reality are intertwined; but, by dividing language into opposing heuristics (as either shaper or reflector), theorists can more easily manage their object of study (literature). However, complicating matters, language as shaper is also a reflection of "reality." Even if the word "reality" is a highly complicated and disputed concept, or something that is avoided by schools of criticism that veer away from any possibility of accessing an objective reality, there certainly is the reflection of a social reality at work in language use. When one says he sees two actors on stage, one is reflecting the gender-neutral bias[69] or manner of viewing the names of professions. Although it is not normally presented in such a

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[67] Being associated with Lenin and communist politics, the term political correctness is far older than the 1990s. But, it seems to rise in popularity and everyday usage (in international English), especially in the negative sense, during the early 1990s, with the 1994 release of the comical *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories: Modern Tales for Our Life and Times*, by James Finn Garner, and comedian Bill Maher's celebrity debate program, *Politically Incorrect*, which ran from 1993-2002. Also, noteworthy, politically correct language (language that would not get you in trouble with the authorities) during Soviet times, becomes appropriated by the West (for conservatives politically correct language is something un-natural forced onto people by hyper-sensitive liberals) after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

[68] The current concern over the power of language to shape thought may also be tied into the Second World War itself, where various nations, the allied powers and the axis powers, successfully utilized powerful propaganda machines. Also, after the Second World War, televisions begin to spread around the world. The connection between language and the shaping of national thought may even link further back to newspapers and the news media.

[69] This is an odd pairing of terms, but bias can be substituted with perception, to illustrate that although neutrality is the aim of gender-neutral language, the relation between neutrality and objectivity should not be overlooked.

manner, please note that "objectivity" is still present in the use of language as a shaper of perception, because, in a way, gender-neutral language implies a more objective assessment of professional identities (actor, doctor, lawyer), then the biases or un-objective terminology of the past.

The following chapter will analyze the attempts of representatives of Canadian and Lithuanian women writers to employ a feminine language in the writing of the female body, as well as their success at conjuring a corporeal language, which interact in the process of subjectivity creation. The comparative literary analysis of two texts will go hand in hand with a critical examination of post-modern feminist theory dealing with the subject of the feminine language and body.

The term 'language' is used in its general sense in this chapter. The analysis of feminine language will encompass narrative techniques, word usage, and sentence construction within a text. The analysis of the body includes women's perceptions of the body, the relationship with the sexual body, and the significance of the sexualized body's experiences for the self in the ongoing process of becoming. The rest of the chapter, the third section, is a comparative analysis (of Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* and Jurga Ivanauskaitė's *Ragana ir lietus*) in search of an empowered representation of female subjectivity conjured through the process of describing a sexual female body in a feminine language. If the aim of feminists was to move away from the patriarchal bias in language, through the use of gender-neutral terms, then this analysis illustrates that the move is much more complicated then perhaps hoped for.

This chapter was written at the end of summer 2007, about six months after the death of Lithuania's most prominent woman writer, Jurga Ivanauskaitė. The analysis of the representation of fictional bodies in Ivanauskaite's best known novel *Ragana ir lietus* (*The Witch and the Rain)* was made more meaningful by the author's statements about her own relationship with her body after going through different cancer treatments: „Ironizuodama juokiuosi, kad mano grožio paslaptis yra septynios operacijos ir šešios chemoterapijos. Paradoksalu, tačiau būtent dabar iš tikrųjų pamilau savo kūną, nors anksčiau turėjau aibę kompleksų, o kartais tiesiog nekenčiau savo atspindžio veidrodyje" (Jurgelaitis 14).[70] As in the lives of her fictional women characters, a tragedy – in this case, the knowledge of her imminent death – made the writer more aware of her bodily experiences, a process of integrating her bodily experiences into a more empowering sense of subjectivity. Although many of Ivanauskaite's novels deal with female sexuality, especially women's painful and often brutal sexual experiences, as well as their attempts to incorporate the tragic experiences in the process of their identity formation, *Ragana ir lietus* remains a special novel. The novel was published in 1993, during the formative years of Lithuanian independence, the years characterized by the strengthening of Christian and highly conservative values, which, arguably, have caused a negative impact on women. The development of a capitalist economy enabled women (due to increased possibilities for their husbands to earn more) either to stay at home or to go to work after giving birth. Mass media, however, encouraged the "re-institution" (in actuality,

[70] I laugh with irony that my beauty secret is seven operations and six chemotherapies. Paradoxically, only now I truly fell in love with my body, although before I had many complexes, and sometimes I just hated my reflection in the mirror.

institution) of the nuclear notion of the family, where women were primarily responsible for raising children and taking care of the home, while men were the primary providers. During the early 1990s, the description of women's sexual experiences, especially when these sexual experiences included men of the religious sphere, was extremely scandalous. Not surprisingly, *Ragana ir lietus* was censored by the national Ethics Commission for being pornographic and anti-Christian. Nevertheless, the novel has influenced the recent Lithuanian film *Nuodėmės Užkalbėjimas* (*The Incantation of a Sin)* and the novel has also become one of the fundamental texts in Lithuanian feminist literature.

While Ivanauskaite is the key woman figure for Lithuanian feminist literature, and the emerging national literature on the 1990s, Nicole Brossard is the key figure for Canadian, and specifically, Québécois literature, as well as the North American feminist movement. Offering a post-modern experimentation with the Canadian literary theme of the *voyageur*, Brossard's *Le désert mauve* demonstrates a "polysemous use of language" (Blodgett 66). This particular novel exemplifies the feminist urge to translate history and literature into feminine language, collapsing the personal and the political/public. Collapsing the phallogocentric binaries, Brossard does not merely voice women's experience, as noted by Louise H. Forsyth, in her introduction to *Nicole Brossard: Essays on Her Works*:

> Cultural traditions have been largely silent about the experiences of women's bodies: sexuality, menstruation, giving birth, rape, violence, pleasures and fears. Brossard evokes these in all their unique

> specificity, and they achieve particular intensity in scenes of passionate *jouissance* when women loving and desiring other women transport themselves into new dimensions… She proposes unexpected perspectives on women, whereby they either take shape and make sense or else reveal the intractable forces that keep them mute. (38)

Brossard is a significant Canadian writer not only because her literary works exemplify the post-modern feminist theories discussed in this chapter, which urge the construction of a feminine language expressing women's corporeal experiences, but also because Brossard's writing is associated with the social and political changes in Quebec during the 1960s and 1970s, specifically, *La Révolution tranquille*. This period in Quebec can be characterized by an increased sense of the marginality of the province – economically, culturally, and linguistically. To put it directly, *La Révolution Tranquille* has influenced the status of women in Quebec. In *Writing in the Feminine: Feminism and Experimental Writing in Quebec*, Karen Gould observes how the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated the diminishing cultural authority of the church in Quebec, and:

> ...the Church's loss of control over sexuality – women's sexuality and their attitudes about sexual practice in particular – brought about important modifications and, for some women, radical transformations in the relationships they had previously maintained with fathers, husbands, employers, politicians and clergymen… (6-7)

Apart from these political changes influencing the personal lives of Quebec's women, the feminists of the time developed a powerful social voice. Surrounded by political and theoretical languages of protest, languages that allowed women to articulate their marginal experiences, women were able to formulate an agenda for social change.

The body, legal rights, and the possibility of language merge in the works of these otherwise differing authors, one French Canadian and the other Lithuanian. The language of politics often concerned the intersection of power and women's biology (reproductive rights, abortion issues, and so on), while emerging theoretical discourses allowed for writers such as Ivanusakaitė and Brossard to challenge the prevailing political power structure, while being respected and soon canonized by the academic community. Similarly then, the question of politicizing women's private corporeal experiences, situating them within a national (and sometimes nationalistic) context, and, finally, constructing a non-objectifying language, constitute central themes in the works of both Jurga Ivanauskaitė and Nicole Brossard.

As this survey should illustrate, the connection between language and identity is a phenomenon beyond simply the fascination of feminist theory and feminist writers with issues pertaining to language, the body, and socialization. Feminist theory and literature are related to a wider cultural movement interested in the power of language to shape perception. In terms of women who write and explore both the limitations of and the creative power in using language for identity formation, one of the major areas of focus involves voicing the female body and female sexual experience.

Why is there no male version of "bitch"[71]?

Literary critics in general and feminist critics in particular have long attempted to deconstruct and offer alternatives to the dualistic philosophical paradigm, which is perceived as one of the main reasons for women's subordination. In Western philosophy and throughout its historical development, the mind-body dualism is a crucial spiritual and philosophical tension, where the body has to be overcome in the process of the construction of the rational, organized self. The hierarchical division of the binaries has included the binarization of the two[72] genders: "...for the ancients, this binarization was epitomized in the two sexes, with men representing the potential transcendence of human reason and women representing the interior carnal compulsion of bodily desires" (Castelnuovo and Guthrie 9). In other words, men were associated with the clean and pure, while women were deemed dirty, in the carnal sense. Fittingly, feminist criticism focused on deconstructing this limiting binarism, although some of these attempts at deconstruction remain trapped in the dualistic linguistic and philosophical paradigms.

For post-modern feminist critics, the notions of the female body, female sexuality and language are difficult to separate. Although sometimes grouped

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[71] Arguably, the male version of "bitch" is "bastard." However, even "bastard" is an insulted directed at a man's mother. So, whereas "bitch" refers to a woman's character (she is angry, difficult, and disobediant), and her sexual practices (she sleeps with many men), "bastard," although technically meaning a child born out of wedlock, socially refers to the child's mother's sexual behaviour (she does not know who the child father is, or is not dignified and conceives out of wedlock.

[72] The very binary structure does not allow the existence of the "in between" or "outside" notions of gender other than woman and man.

together with biological essentialists, who postulate that women's subjectivity is defined by their biology, post-modern feminists (such as Susan Bordo, Judith Butler, or Elizabeth Grosz) perceive the relationship between female bodies, sexualities and subjectivities as fluctuating and dependent on the power discourse in a particular society:

> Using postmodern terminology, female bodies and subjectivities are produced within a particular historical network of power-knowledge discourses. Norms are articulated verbally and in written texts and are internalized and reinforced by state agencies and powerful social institutions e.g., education and medicine). These norms are intertwined with issues of power and control. (Castelnuovo and Guthrie 15)

In the post-modern world, and, specifically, for post-modern feminists, there is little difference between fictional and non-fictional texts in terms of their power over subjectivity formation. Non-fictional literature, such as scientific works have been biased, as have legal documents, whereas legal norms espousing equality have only emerged recently. Similarly, fictional works have contributed to a disempowering socialization of women, a reinforcement of unquestioned and biased norms. As illustrated in detail in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubard's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, as well as their other works, fiction and literature historically have had a profound influence on "educating" women and sustaining the image of a woman in tension: as asexual, and confined by her sexuality; verbal, but unable to speak

rationally; dark (as in irrational, superstitious, unclean), and yet responsible for the "pure" upbringing of future generations. In order to achieve a sense of subjectivity which is empowering, women, feminist critics and feminist writers felt the need to resist the binary philosophical paradigm, and offer a non-dualistic liberatory strategy that would transcend the academic, political, medical and fictional worlds. Many critics have attempted to deconstruct the hierarchical cultural boundaries, but few, if any, have come up with non-dualistic alternatives.

Hélène Cixous is a peculiar feminist critic who not only argues for the liberation of women (philosophical, creative and social aspects of liberation), but also embodies, in the true sense of the word, her views in her creative and academic writings. "Le rire de la Méduse", a challenging fundamental text of post-modern feminism powerfully urges women to liberate their bodies, their language and their self from the logocentric restrictions.[73] Cixous' theory collapses the boundary between the private and the public, the personal and the official, the biological and the academic, for she writes "as a woman, toward women" (Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa" 309). Summarizing ages of women's oppression, Cixous explodes in metaphors not typical for academic writing:

> I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What's the meaning of these waves,

[73] The term logocentric is derived from Lacan referring to the "law of the father." Logocentric denotes a philosophical attitude which values the masculine principle (maleness and rationality, order and reason associated with it) over the feminine principle (femaleness and emotionality, chaos and sensitivity associated with it).

> these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism, hasn't been ashamed of her strengths? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well adjusted normal woman has a…divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? (Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" 309)

The relationship between woman and her body has been hostile, for the prevailing discourse either excluded women from itself, or presented it in terms conjured by men, thus constructing a woman who is pure, weak, divine, and, at the same time, monstrous, due to her biology. Women who do not succumb to the pre-existing definitions of social and biological femininity are pushed to the margins of culture, thereby provoking feelings of self-disdain and shame.[74] In a footnote, Cixous identifies the binaries as the reason of women's literary subordination:

> For what they have said so far, for the most part, stems from the opposition of activity/passivity from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the

[74] Interestingly, the concept of shame starts the newest collection of essays by Arturas Tereskinas, a Lithuanian scholar of sexuality, masculinity, nationhood and culture. He claims that: "shame is not only an emotion, provoking many other negative emotions. It is a cultural thing which keeps a certain social, cultural and individual stability, and emphasizing that there exist boundaries which must not be violated" (Tereskinas 9). This emotion of shame, abnormality continues to marginal new groups, particularly, sexual minorities.

> consequential phantasm of woman as a "dark continent" to penetrate and to "pacify"... Conquering her, they've made haste to depart from her borders, to get out of sight, out of body. (Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" 310)

The reference to fantasy may have multiple meanings in this passage. First, the binary, which is aptly referred to as an opposition here, itself is imagined and reproduced in philosophical and medical treaties. Women's passivity has been explained by the "scientific" proof that the female "invisible" sexual organs produce a passive egg, and, therefore, a woman is and should be passive in sexual relations, as well as society at large. Secondly, the imagined essentialising metaphorical construction of relationships between male and female principles extends from a political metaphor (women are colonized as continents), to sexual relations, and literary representations of women's bodies. Women are, therefore, encouraged to fight these "phantasms" by reclaiming their bodies, their positions and their authentic experiences resisting essentialism and generalizations ("there is, at this time, no general woman" (Cixous "The Laugh of the Medusa" 309)). Extending Cixous' claim that "they've made haste to depart ... out of body," another contradiction of patriarchal philosophy must be noted. Although women are pushed out of their bodies, in the sense that they do not have control over how the female body is being described, characterized, and evaluated, at the same time, women's subjectivity is limited to the female body, as the definition of her subjectivity is based on a

patriarchal definition of her relationship with that body, a definition which is based on the perspective from the objectifying male gaze[75].

The three women characters in *Ragana ir Lietus* experience a very fragmented relationship with their bodies. Their bodies suffer from the torturing brought on by themselves or by the men they meet. The three main characters embody historical and mythical women (Mary Magdalene and a witch from the Middle Ages, Viktorija) who were considered unacceptable primarily because of their carnality. Women are not in control of their bodies. Their desire is articulated in phallogocentric language and is evaluated by patriarchal norms. The sexual relationships they experience are taboo, and their sexual relationships leave these women on the margins of the already marginalized female gender. Engaging in relationships with men of religion banishes Vika, Marija Viktorija and Mary Magdalene to the outskirts of society, not only because they are women and unworthy of public space, but also because they violate the rules of public religious space and are therefore legally characterized as witches. The protagonists internalize these negative characterizations and lose the possibility of becoming empowered subjectivities. They perceive their body, as well as their bodily experiences, through the eyes of their lovers, rendering themselves as fragmented mythical, and symbolic beings. Overall, there is no sense of flowing, fluctuating and developing subjective realities. Instead, the protagonists see and evaluate themselves from the outside, focusing on separate body parts which

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[75] In "Sorties," Cixous touches upon voyeur's theory: "But *sexual difference* is not determined merely by the fantasized relationship to anatomy, which is based, to a great extent, upon the point of *view*, therefore upon a strange importance accorded [by Freud and Lacan] to exteriority and to the specular in the elaboration of sexuality. A voyeur's theory, of course" (Cixous, "Sorties" 268).

traditionally empower women, either mythically, or through the sexual satisfaction of men.

One of the most important body parts repeatedly described in Ivanauskaite's novel is the protagonists' hair. Hair is often referred to as symbolizing the magical power of the mythical Medusa. The curly black hair, as a symbol accompanying the three women through the centuries separating them, is an image extremely rich in meaning. Before cutting off her hair, as a sign of mourning, after she is left by her lover priest, Viktorija spends her first night alone, reading Simone de Beauvoir. Ironically, instead of feeling in any way liberated by the ideas of feminist empowerment in Beauvoir, Viktorija finds herself staring at the mirror and seeing her former lover in her most intimate space – her own body:

> Aš jo buvau užvis labiausiai prisigėrusi. Ypač mano veidas. Nes stebeilydavau į veidrodį jo laukdama... Tas žmogus tarsi iš naujo mane sukūrė. O gal sugebėjo atskleisti pačią mano esmę... Jis buvo visur – mano akyse, lūpose, odoje, plaukuose. Privalėjau jį užmiršti.. Jei negalėjau susinaikinti, turėjau pakeisti bent jau savo veidą. Sunaikinti grožį, tą vienintelę, ypatingą mano veido melodiją, kuri, kaip ir meilė, buvo tik Pauliui skirta. (Ivanauskaitė 23)[76]

[76] My own body was most of all saturated with him. Bspecially my face. Because I used to stare at the mirror while waiting for him... That man as though created me anew. Or maybe he was able to reveal my very essence... He was everywhere – in my eyes, my lips, my skin, my hair. I had to forget him. If I could not destroy myself, I had to at least change my face. Destroy my beauty, that single and particular melody of my face which, like love, was meant for Paul alone.

The protagonist, although freely experimenting with a taboo sexual relationship with a priest, does not experience an authentic relationship with her own body. She, herself, perceives her body as a commodity – something unrelated to her, something like a gift to be given to her lover. The man has the power to open her essence and to (re)create her. He has left his imprint in her eyes, lips, skin and hair – and all through the woman's own gaze reflected in the mirror. One could not conclude, solely, that a man is an instrument in fragmenting Viktorija's life and her sense of self. Paul does not violate her in either a physical or a spiritual way, but Viktorija herself embodies the objectifying male gaze, and describes herself and her experiences using phallogocentric language; she censors herself and her body with the power of patriarchy. If she was empowered, she would have seen herself as a reference point, as a perceptive being, not as merely an object of perception. By perceiving herself through the male gaze, Viktorija's tragedy is not simply one of romantic loss/yearning, as it may be in a generic romance. While the traditional narrative role of the longing mistress is there, the novel complicates matters by exposing Viktorija as so thoroughly indoctrinated by patriarchy, that she perceives herself and thus traps herself within patriarchal discourse. The gazer and the object of the gaze, the objectifier and objectified, or the perceptual attacker and perceptualized victims are one. If there is a link between thought and language, then the narrative device of romantic lover experiencing loss/yearning is transformed into a prison, with the embodied male gaze serving as the torturous prison guard, who, separates a woman's body from her.

Power over one's body can be expressed in many different ways. Physical tortures have been used to exert punitive power over criminals, with the death penalty being the ultimate punishment. Women's bodies, however, continue to undergo controversial transformations that carry various meanings for different societies. In some cultures, the female body must be hidden from the gaze of men; as some argue, in order to protect its sanctity. In other societies, the tendency is the opposite – women's bodies are used to lure and attract men's attention. In such societies, short skirts, tight shirts, body piercing and other forms of decorations are used to make women's bodies more appealing for their "consumers" – which include men and women. More radical transformations also range from forceful female genital mutilations (typical in some parts of the developing world) to supposedly freely chosen plastic surgeries (in the "developed" societies). It would be difficult to find a country and a society in the world that does not exercise at least some sort of direct manipulative power over the body. One particular body part, women's hair has long been considered to have special mythical and symbolic power. The image surfacing in *Ragana ir lietus* is the hair of Medusa, the woman who could kill men with her gaze alone, and whose hair consisted of poisonous snakes. Cutting hair for women meant taking away their beauty, or hair cutting symbolized their emotional status. Viktorija refers to a tribe of women who shave their heads as a sign of mourning. Cutting off one's hair can also be seen as a political statement, and a paradoxical one at that. For some radical feminists, for instance, not shaving their body hair was a visual statement against the female body's confirmation to the standards of beauty (where the woman's skin has to be smooth as silk, white as milk, with roses blooming

on her gentle cheeks). However, the "beauty industry" in the newly independent Lithuania celebrates the number of options of getting rid of women's body hair and strongly encourages hairlessness as a synonym for cleanliness. In other words, the female body is dirtied by hair, requiring its removal. In *Ragana ir Lietus*, the process of cutting the protagonists' black hair serves as a symbolic act echoed through the ages. Viktorija and the M.V. cut off their black curls (described as small snakes (Ivanauskaitė 24)) and shave their heads: „Juodos garbanos pažiro ant pečių ir lyg gedulo skraistė nuslinko iki juosmens. M.V... panarino galvą, o ilgos sruogos nelyginant juodi pralieto rašalo zigzagai pasklido ant knygos..." (Ivanauskaitė 26).[77] The metaphors describing M.V. 's hair refer to women's different roles and the way body has been used to fit these roles. Loose hair serves as a symbol of mourning, and, at the same time, paradoxically, it denotes literacy – it spreads on the book like spilled ink.[78] Cutting the hair off makes M.V. look "sexless" and she wonders why angels, who are supposed to be gender neutral, are usually portrayed with beautiful curls (Ivanauskaitė 27). Symbolically, hair, the symbol of woman's beauty and power, is shaved off using a very masculine utensil – a rusty shaver. Continuing the extended metaphor of the woman serving as a vessel of patriarchal power, it is a woman herself who violates, transforms and hurts her body to overcome or to express her spiritual suffering.

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[77] The black curls scattered on her shoulders and like a shawl of mourning slipped to her waste. M.V. hung her head down and the long locks of hair like zigzags of spilled black ink spread out on the book...

[78] Roberta Gilchrist describes how nuns in medieval monasteries used to cut their hair as "a symbolic act of the renunciation of female sensuality" (19).

Cixous also proposes a concept of *écriture féminine* as a means of conceptually liberating women through their bodies. Like "The Laugh of the Medusa" itself, women's writing needs to go against the orderly, rational, grammatically and syntactically correct logocentric writing tradition.

> Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse… (Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa" 315)

The article rhythmically moves in waves of concepts and powerful emotions evoked by disturbing historical memories. Patriarchal language seems to transcend national boundaries[79], as it has been used, due its hierarchical binary nature, to sustain class differences, colonization, and laws (moral, political, and economic) within society. The "beyond," "through" and the "underneath" which Cixous refers to are not exemplified. In fact, feminists so far have not succeeded at identifying whether this feminine language is possible, and, if so, what kind of language it is. One of the biggest achievements of feminists like Cixous, Irigaray, and Butler is their expressed urge to resist the demeaning evaluation of the attributes related to the "female" side of the binary. In other words, they urge to embrace the value of and in the female

[79] Herein lies the difficulty for language feminists, because it is unclear whether all languages (not only French and English) are phallogocentric. Although language here denotes the structure of language, its philosophical paradigm and its hierarchical nature, in other words, language that is independent of national characteristics, it is still doubtful whether all languages could be defined as phallogocentric.

body, to broaden the understanding of literature to embrace not only the rational, logical and unified writing of male authors[80], but also the fluctuating, disordered, emotional, personal, and sexual *écriture féminine*.

Feminist theorists have been challenging the traditional patriarchal presentation of women's bodies as pleasing and passive. At first glance, the women in *Ragana ir Lietus* are neither pleasing nor passive. Apart from Mary Magdalene, the other two protagonists are not described as beautiful and pleasing to the male gaze, yet they attempt to satisfy their lovers in any way possible, treating their bodies as commodities. All of the protagonists are active sexually, and they also exert power over their bodies when trying to satisfy men or to punish themselves through inflicting bodily pain. Yet there is a very strong sense of alienation between the women's sense of self and their bodies. Women's view of their own bodies should be an act of liberation from the objectifying male gaze, but in this novel, the women's view of themselves merely reflects back that male gaze. In her analysis of body representations, Kim Sawchuk claims:

> Women in European cultures have been socialized to be passive objects: they "appear", while men "act"... The history of European painting shows that the looks of women are merely displays for men to watch, while women watch themselves being looked at... Whenever women look at themselves, they are acting like men. (Sawchuk 64)

[80] As an alternative to "fathering" a text, feminists offer to see the text as being born by the woman writer. Albeit, in doing so, they fall into the trap of the binary paradigm of father/mother.

Although the characters of Viktorija and Marija Viktorija are empowered in a sense that they "write themselves," they merely echo the evaluation ascribed onto them by their lovers. The evaluation of the one whom the voyeur observes, the language which is used to describe who is being observed, and, finally, the experienced relationship between the body and language all intertwine in the process of (dis)empowered subjectivity creation.

Jouissance

For Luce Irigaray, another influential French feminist, the notion of female desire, female sexuality, and female creativity expressed through her notion *jouissance féminine* is the principle means of challenging Cartesian mind-body dualism. Irigaray, similarly to Kristeva, though much more politically and aggressively, argues for the reinstitution of the maternal order, which would question the dominance of the law of the father. Moreover, Irigaray claims that "our society and our culture operate on the basis of an original matricide" (Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* 11). Attacking the Freudian notion of female desire, which explains female desire as the longing for the metaphorical expression of the masculine power (penis envy), Irigaray asserts that the phallus is preceded by maternity:

> Doesn't the phallic erection occur at the place where the umbilical cord once was? The phallus becomes the organizer of the world

> through the man-father at the very place where the umbilical cord, that primal link to the mother, once gave birth to man and woman. All that had taken place within an originary womb, the first nourishing earth, first waters, first sheaths, first membranes in which the *whole* child was held, as well as the *whole* mother, through the mediation of her blood. According to a relationship that is obviously not symmetrical, mother and child are linked in a way that precedes all dissociations, all tearing of their bodies into pieces. (Irigaray 14)

Irigaray (re)-institutes the maternal function, and presents the attributes related to motherhood, such as water, earth, sheaths, membranes, blood, and others, positively. The reason why they are positive values (or, rather, more positive than male attributes) is that they pre-exist the law and the metaphor of the father. Interestingly, Irigaray does not deconstruct the binaries of father-mother, mind-body, or wholeness – fragmentation. Still working under the same binary hierarchies, she offers the re-evaluation of the maternal principle, and presents it as a positive force for women themselves and society at large. Moreover, Irigaray stipulates that women do not need the masculine element in sexual satisfaction, because women are autoerotic in terms of their sexual identity:

> In this context it is important to remind ourselves that, since the first body we as women had to relate to was a woman's body and our first love is love of the mother, woman always have an ancient and primary

> relationship to what is called homosexuality. Men, on the other hand, always have an ancient relationship to heterosexuality, since their first object is a woman. (Irigaray 19-20)

Irigaray argues that only this homoerotic, non-phallic "economy" allows for the expressing and experiencing of sexual identity in a harmonious way. The love for sister-mother is essential, according to the critic, in order to "cease being the slaves of the phallic cult, commodities to be used and exchanged by men, competing objects in the marketplace" (Irigaray 20). Although starting off as a non-dualistic attempt to define female subjectivity based on female only sexuality, Irigaray's paradigm ends up in the same binary, the hierarchical philosophy of oppositions, where women are encouraged to take over the superior position.[81]

Apart from arguing for the liberation of purely feminine sexuality, Irigaray argues that the becoming of feminine subjectivity – female gender – is only possible after the gendered nature of the language (and by this, she specifies Greek and German – Hegel's and Freud's language) is deconstructed. In her works, Irigaray rarely refers to the biological body, and instead uses the term "morphology of the

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[81] The logic for the superior position is that the female principle preceded the male one (mother comes before father, love between women comes before love between men) and, therefore, the female principle should be held superior. Irigaray's notion of the initial love of the fetus to her/his mother needs to be questioned. First, this feeling of love between the fetus and the mother is difficult (if at all possible) to measure. If this relationship is not metaphorical, but physical, then a question of knowledge arises - how can we know that the fetus loves the mother? How can we know if the fetus perceives herself as a separate being from the mother? Can we say that the fetus "forgets" this relationship when being born because of the law of the father? Lastly, assuming that the relationship between the fetus and the mother exists, can we see it as analogous to the sexual relationship lovers experience? Do we see our mothers as lovers? Should we see our mothers as lovers? Although it is obvious how Irigaray attempts to deconstruct the incest taboo as one of the reasons of limiting purely female sexual experiences. If, however, Irigaray is using the mother love as a metaphor, it is unclear how the metaphorical translates into a physical homoerotic relationship she offers to women.

body". The female body is perceived as lacking, passive, and unclean, because that is the meaning given to it by the culture, by systems of language and representations which are internalized, and which consequently make language possible (Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* 113). For Irigaray, the notion of gender is closely related to the language of power relations:

> Gender is index and mark of the *subjectivity* and the ethical responsibility of the speaker. In fact gender is not just a question of biology and physiology, a matter of private life, of animal habits or vegetal fertility... Gender stands for the unsubstitutable position of the *I* and the *you (le tu)* and of their modes of expression. Once the difference between *I* and *you* is gone, then asking, thanking, appealing, questioning... also disappear... By taking over from the *I* (here and now) of the subject and from some potential *you*, these other kinds of truth can make up the rules. (Irigaray 170)

Apart from the usual connotations with biology, experiences and rules, gender subjectivity for Irigaray connotes the position of the speaker – both temporal and hierarchical. In other parts of *Sexes and Genealogies,* Irigaray discusses linear time understanding as another patriarchal control mechanism, so the "here and now" is a reference to a non-rhythmical understanding of time. Unfortunately, the female language solution offered by Irigaray continues to reinforce the binary, colonialist, and aggressive positioning of the subject and object. The "you" needs to take over the

"I"; however, this "taking over" – a militaristic, colonial, and patriarchal metaphor – merely inverses the binary without deconstructing, in a non-violent way, the power relations and the very need for unequal power relations. The very fact that Irigaray proposes "other kinds of truth making up the rules" problematizes her theory, for a post-modern feminist fluctuating, emotional, and borderless subjectivity should not be controlled by "truths" or "rules" -- philosophically it has no basis to define what is true.

Due to the complexity of Irigaray's works, and the way in which this critic attempts to exemplify the "irrational", not necessarily organized or by the rules mode of academic writing, her claims could be understood differently. Elizabeth Grosz, for instance, in her *Sexual Subversions: the Three French Feminists*, stresses that "her (Irigaray's) work is not a *true* description of women or femininity, a position that is superior to *false* patriarchal conceptions… Her aim is quite different: it is to devise a *strategic* and combative understanding, one whose function is to make explicit what has been excluded or left out of phallocentric images" (Grosz 110). As this sort of combative strategy challenges the patriarchal cultural representations of the female sexuality, Irigaray's criticism has its value within the context of academic discourses, as well as society at large.

Women's bodies in *Le Désert mauve*, differently from those in *Ragana ir lietus*, are presented as more autonomous from the male gaze.[82] Moreover, these female bodies are free from the dualistic paradigm of thought. These bodies are

[82] One of few males of the novel, the man who shoots Angela, does, however, have her trapped in his gaze.

congruent with language and reality; they are bodies in becoming and in process; they are integral to the environment in which they are presented, and, lastly, female subjectivity is conjured through the experience of purely feminine *jouissance.* In *Le Désert mauve* the bodies are fluid, as there are no apparent boundaries separating the physical body from a factual "reality" and from the body's sensuous experiences. Female bodies here form realities in becoming:

> Le réalité était une femme en T-shirt, immense dans ses seins, décuplée avec des enfants calqués sur ses reins, sur ses cuisses...
> Il me fallait un corps devant l'impensable et ce corps je le produirais...
> Ce corps, je le filtrerais de l'ignorance, du savoir et de l'impensable qui l'accablaient. Ce corps serait une équation de vie à même l'impossible réalité. (Brossard 37)[83]

The female bodies are intangible, becoming, a fluid experience integrating visual appearances (T-shirt, huge breasts), as well as knowledge and life. In this way, the female bodies become the only known reality. The body itself becomes the prism through which knowledge of reality is gained and subjectivity is repeatedly (per)formed. Similarly to Viktorija and Marija Viktorija, Mélanie perceives herself and her body through somebody's voyeuristic gaze. It is not an objectifying male

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[83] Reality was a woman in a T-shirt, huge in her breasts, ten times as large with children imprinted onto her loins, her thighs... A body was required to face the unthinkable and this body, I would produce it... I would filter this body of ignorance, of knowledge and of the unthinkable burdening it. This body would be a life equation tapping impossible reality itself. (This and the following guotes from *Le désert mauve* are taken from *Mauve Desert,* translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood)

gaze; instead, it is the gaze of another woman attempting to *read* Mélanie's emotions: "Elle m'observait, vigie statique, surveillant chaque battement de mes paupières, épiant toute trace d'émoi, le moindre signe qui pouvait trahir sur mon visage une émotion" (Brossard 20).[84] This out-of-body experience is very different from Viktorija's. Through Lorna's eyes, Méanie perceives her body emotionally and experientially, not as an object meant to satisfy. As a result, the feelings of fragmentation and alienated subjectivity are not expelling the woman from her own body. Although there are references to women's body parts in *Le Désert mauve*, they serve as symbols intertwined with the corporeal experience, as opposed to the fragmented attempts to overcome the limiting mythical connotations in *Ragana ir Lietus.* When coming across Lorna scribbling something on a piece of paper with Mélanie's mother on her lap, Mélanie is about to exclaim that the writing does not make any sense when "je remarquai la souplesse de la main de Lorna dans les cheveux de ma mère" (Brossard 20).[85] The relationship of the two women through the hair serves as an explanation, an example and an expression of what written words cannot capture. The female body here is not fragmented, punished, conquered, and redefined, but, instead, experienced as a fluid and changing subjectivity, positively intertwined with environment, reality, and language.

The environment in which the female bodies can be found in these two novels bears a significant mark on their subjectivity formation. Nature is personified and experienced (as opposed to being observed) by the protagonists. This amalgamation

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[84] She would watch me, static watcher, monitoring every blink of my eyelids, spying any flutter of sensation, the slightest sign upon my face liable to betray an emotion

[85] noticed the ease of Lorna's hand in my [*Melanie's]* mother's hair

of the female element and nature is characteristic of the eco-feminist movement, which has been criticized for strengthening the oppression of women and nature by continuing the traditional hierarchical binaries of man-woman, or society-nature. In Brossard's novel, however, the woman is not merely situated in nature. In other words, wild nature (the desert in this case), is not presented as a particular place *for* Mélanie, but, rather, as an ever changing set of forces impacting her sense of self, conjured through her understanding of her body and her language:

> Très jeune, j'appris à aimer le feu du ciel, la foudre torrentielle ramifiée au-dessus de la ville come un écoulement de la pensée dans le cerveau. Les nuits d'orage sec, je devenais tremblements, détonations, décharge totale. Puis je m'abandonnais à toutes les illumnations, ces fissures qui comme autant de blessures lignaient mon corps virtuel, me liaient à l'immensité. Et alors le corps fond comme une lueur à l'abrégé des mots. Les yeux, l'existence plient devant ça qui s'avance en nous, certitude. Le désert boit tout. (Brossard 20-21)[86]

Although somewhat traditionally presenting the female protagonist in natural surroundings, this passage illustrates a non-dualistic treatment of the female body's relation to nature. Mélanie does not merely feel at home in the desert; her body

[86] Very young I learned to live the fire from the sky, torrential lightning branched out over the city like thinking flowing in the mind. On dry storm nights I would become tremors, detonations, total discharge. Then surrender to all the illuminations, those fissures which like so many wounds lined my virtual body, linking me to the vastness. And so the body melts like a glimmer of light in the abstract of words. Eyes, existence give in before that which comes forth inside us, certitude. The desert drinks everything in.

becomes nature, *experiencing* the illuminations and fissures. The experience of this reality is intrinsically linked to language, for it "melts in the abstract of words." The contrast of dryness and wetness is a significant removal of the traditional binary, where women's bodies serve as synonyms to mother Earth, with their wetness, fertility, and darkness. Mélanie's body, language and place, is the desert with its dry storms, yearning to "drink everything in." Although abundant with painful references, pain is not separate from a sense of empowerment. Instead of expelling her from her body, the possibilities of pain, of solitude, and of danger exist as possibilities of her congruous subjectivity.

For the female protagonists in *Ragana ir Lietus*, the surrounding environment further alienates their bodies. Viktorija does not feel at home anywhere. Unable to sleep and wandering around the city in the night, she concludes: „Nežinau ar begali būti miestas tuštesnis už Vilnių naktį. Jaučiausi jame kaip svetimkūnis, kaip aštrus šapas, įkritęs į milžinišką, plačiai atmerktą akį" (Ivanauskaitė 76)[87]. Planning a suicide which would not be discovered for many weeks Viktorija finds refuge in an old abandoned house. The only remotely empowering place for Viktorija and for Marija Viktorija is the bath. Reflecting the traditional binary paradigm, Marija Viktorija repeatedly finds herself in womb-like spaces, which are small, dark, and wet. In the steam bath, she reestablishes her relationship with her tortured body: „Kūnas atrodė visiškai svetimas. Bet sausas, karštas, švarus pirties oras veikė nelyginant glamonė. Palengva gyvastis ėmė grįžti į iškankintas rankas ir kojas,

[87] I don't know if there could exist a city emptier than Vilnius at night. There, I felt like a foreign body, like a sharp straw, which had fallen into a gigantic wide open eye.

suvytusią odą, maudžiantį stuomenį" (Ivanauskaitė 210)[88]. Differently from Mélanie, the surrounding environment is clearly separated from the body, which is being felt upon rather than perceived as an empowered agent experiencing the nature. Yet, at this particular moment, the female protagonist of *Ragana ir Lietus* is closest to experiencing her independent subjectivity. Remembering her lover's words: „gražiu Viešpats vadinamas todėl, kad Jis visuose daiktuose – kartu ir atskirai – sukuria jų tapatumo su savimi darną[89]"(Ivanauskaitė 211), Marija Viktorija senses the lightness of her thoughts and freedom through emotional cleanliness:

> M.V. pasijuto kaip niekad laisva. Visoje jos esybėje nebeliko jokių norų, lūkesčių, vilčių, troškimų, siekių, svajonių, nerimo, įtampos, baimių ir kalčių. Mintys buvo perregimos ir lengvos, kaip tarp knygos lapų sudžiovinti augalėliai. Nebeliko nei vakardienos, nei rytojaus, tik – visa apimantis šiandien. (Ivanauskaitė 211)[90]

The sense of female subjectivity is portrayed as fragile emptiness, absent of both positive and negative feelings. Although situated in a point of temporal fluidity, where no separation between today, yesterday, and tomorrow exists, this female self is conjured by somebody else's power. The lightness and the fragility of the woman's

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[88] The body felt absolutely alien. But dry, hot and clean sauna air felt like caress. Slowly, life was coming back to tortured hands and legs, withered skin, and aching waist.

[89] God is called beautiful because He creates in all things – together and apart – the harmony with themselves.

[90] M.V. felt free like never before. There was nothing left in her whole being – no wishes, no expectations, no hopes, no desires, no goals, no dreams, no worry, no tension, no fear and no guilt. Her thoughts were transparent and light like tiny plants dried amongst the pages of a book. There was no more yesterday, no more tomorrow, only the overwhelming today.

thoughts are invoked by an external power - a book. Nature in its traditional sense, represented as symbols of a garden which M.V. can barely see through the small window, the garden in her husband's house which she remembers, and the plants dried amidst the pages of a book. These images symbolize traditional femininity, but do not provide a refuge for the subjectivity of the female protagonists. In other words, the eco-feminist urge to re-discover women's empowerment within the symbolic Mother Earth fails to bring about a sense of fulfillment.

Being in language

Writing the female body is intrinsically linked to notions of desire, danger and sexuality. Both Brossard and Ivanauskaitė shock readers with the language in their novels, althoug language in *Ragana ir lietus* is less deconstructive than that in *Le Désert mauve.* When commenting on writing, Brossard notes how "writing brings into view landscapes, language structures that are infinitely attractive and mysteriously precise and that produce the desire to live, the desire both to be elsewhere, and, paradoxically, to settle into the heart of the essential" (Brossard qtd by L.H. Forsyth 20). Her writing in *Le Désert mauve* demonstrates precisely that tension between desires, being and absence, sound and silence, and the gendered nature of the language. Ivanauskaitė's writing, similarly, is marked by explosive silences violating the strict order of Lithuanian literary language, thus challenging the reader to explore the female frustrations provoked by indescribably bodily experiences restricted by the dominant patriarchal discourse.

The endevour of gendering the language has challenged feminist theorists and writers. Probably the most prominent and most extensively quoted and criticized feminist theorist who deals with the body and language interconnection is Judith Butler. Although Butler extensively refers to such philosophers as Kristeva and Foucault, one of her key influences is Monique Wittig. Like Wittig[91], Butler disagrees with Kristevan and Foucaultian belief in the body pre-existing discourse, instead proposing that the sexual body, like gender, is a discursive category which, potentially, does not have a physical reality. Contesting Beauvoir's notion of the body being formed by some dominant discourse, Butler claims:

> But "the body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender; the question then emerges: To what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will? (*Gender Trouble* 13)

In other words, what one understands as being the body, one's ability to relate to that body and experience it, is conditioned and limited by discourse. The analysis of the body and its experience, in turn, also reflects the influences of dominant gender and

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[91] In her *The Straight Mind*, Wittig claims that "language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it" (43-44). In other words, language is what forms the body.

sex discourse. These limitations, these definitions and these descriptions of the body "are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures" (*Gender Trouble* 13). This assumption calls into question the "scientific" and "natural" theories of the body, of sex and of gender. Consequently, the notion of agency, specifically, agency through language and discourse becomes a significant notion in subjectivity analysis.

In both, *Bodies That Matter* as well as *Gender Trouble*, Butler asserts that body and gender are performative re-inscriptions and re-citations. Adding this view to Beauvoir's, Cixous, Kristeva's, Irigaray's and Wittig's problematizations of body and language relation, Butler's notion of gender amalgamates the aspects of sexuality, body (physical, fictional, constructed), language and power in a new notion of subjectivity. This gender subjectivity is a process, a becoming, an act: "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (*Gender Trouble* 33). The performativity of gender is a linguistic feature, as, in Butler's understanding, gender constitutes the identity it claims to be.[92] Gender identity, and women's subjectivity, in turn, do not precede the language, as there is no "I" outside language, the language which produces and re-produces heterosexual subjects. According to Butler, "...body is not a 'being,' but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality" (*Gender Trouble* 177). In order to resist this gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, women

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[92] In her interviews, Butler connects the use of the term "performativity" to speech act theory proposed by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* and Derrida's reaction in his essay "Signature Event Context".

need to gain the position of the authoritative, speaking subject who can resist "textual violences" against women's subjectivity. Language, therefore, is a significant aspect of women's subjectivity formation, as it is the main means of expressing women's bodily experiences which have been censored and defined by the phallogocentric discourse in a way that renders the unique feminine subjectivity violently deprived of its empowering feminine aspects. To continue with the dualistic paradigm, language also serves in rendering very private *becoming* into a public realm, in this way deconstructing the notions of the unacceptable, indecent, unclean, improper, and irrational (all connotations of the female body and all traditionally excluded from the academic and fictional spheres).

Ivanauskaitė, in *Ragana ir lietus* as well as her other novels, questions and opposes this exclusion of corporeal experiences, references to female body parts and female sexuality in general. The very act of openly writing about the body serves as an attempt of voicing the female subjectivity. The free and blunt description of sexual intercourse in *Ragana ir lietus* is one of the main reasons for the novel's being banned immediately upon its publication. Liberal feminist insistence on liberating women's sexual practices, advertising birth control, and including sexual (private) discourse into the public sphere was meant to empower women by allowing them to incorporate these uniquely feminine experiences into their subjectivity formation. However, the celebrated sexual freedom, although liberating, at the first glance, when analyzed in greater depth, does not enable the female protagonists to incorporate their sexual experiences into their sense of self:

> Ligi tol meilės dalykai man buvo kaip koks žaidimas. Savotiški šachmatai. Naujos ir naujos partijos... Aš viską išprotaudavau. Kylančią ar slūgstančią aistrą, net stipriausius ir ilgiausius orgazmus... Tačiau Paulius bučiuodamas savo karštligišku trūksmingu alsavimu sakytum įkvėpė manin visiškai kitą dvasią: aistringą, laukinę, žvėrišką. Tarsi pati nuo savęs atitrūkus ir pakibus kažkur palubėje, stebėjau tą ant grindų šėlstančią, man nebepažįstamu balsu šūkaliojančią moterį.(Ivanauskaitė 50)[93]

Sexual freedom and sexual relations are governed by the traditionally masculine principle of reason – like a chess game. A supposedly liberating sexual experience, freeing the passionate, animalistic and wild spirit in Viktorija, breaks up her sense of self. The woman becomes absorbed in her new lover, losing her autonomous relationship with her own body.

Homosexual relationships, echoing Irigaray's insistence on the need of the uniquely feminine *jouissance*, are significant in the portrayal of the sexual experiences of the female protagonists in both novels. In *Ragana ir lietus*, lesbian relationships are presented as acts of rebellion and competition between women. M.V. and Upe (M.V.'s competitor in her striving for the monk's love), as well as the contemporary protagonist, Viktorija have lesbian relations, which, instead of allowing

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[93] Until then, sex was like a game to me. Like chess. New and new games… I used to plan everything. The rise and fall of passion, even the strongest and longest orgasms… But Paul, his kisses, his feverish gasping, as though breathed in an absolutely new spirit into me – the spirit which was passionate, wild, and animalistic. As though separated from myself and hanging somewhere at the ceiling, I watched that strange woman, raving on the floor, screaming with the voice I have not heard before.

them to experience a feminine *jouissance*, provoke very negative feelings. Seeing another woman's face when she is lost in passion, M.V. and Viktorija wonder how a woman can look so repulsive when having sex: „Nejau ir aš pati tokia būdavau, būnu ir būsiu? Įsitempę raumenys, iššiepti dantys, nuo prakaito blizganti oda, gilios raukšlės, padėrusios akys..." (Ivanauskaitė 147).[94] The sexual experiences with the other women leave the protagonists with a sense of guilt and shame. This is both an example of a failure of theoretical feminist paths of empowerment, which are articulated based on the binary philosophiocal paradigm, and the deep incorporation of the male gaze into women's self perception.

Le Désert mauve offers a differing view of a non-phallic mode of *joiussance,* one which allows the protagonist to positively relate to her sexualized body. Continuing the non-dualistic description of femininity, when Mélanie notices her mother and Lorna make love, she describes them not as separate objects, but as one existence inscribed upon another: "Un soir, je surpris dans l'obscurité de leur chambre ma mère, épaules et nuque tendues comme une existence vers la nudité de Lorna" (Brossard 18).[95] The female lovers in the novel resist the objectifying love of a woman's body, which Brossard skillfully demonstrates by using the word 'langue' and suggesting the erotic character of language:

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[94] Was I also like this? Am I like this? Will I be like this? Tense muscles, showing teeth, skin glistening with sweat, deep wrinkles, vacant eyes…

[95] I came upon my mother, her shoulders and the nape of her neck braced like an existence toward Lorna's. nakedness

> -Est-ce que tu crois qu'on puisse aimer autour du corps? Qu'on puisse aimer sans odeur, sans saveur, sans que la langue n'aille chercher son sel sur la peau de l'aimée, sans le froissement des mains sur les cuisses, sans qu'il ne soit nécessaire de raffiner nos sens? Crois-tu que tu aurais pu m'aimer en faisant abstraction de mon corps, si je n'avais été qu'une image au fond de tes yeux, s'il t'avait fallu contourner mon corps pour m'élire? (Brossard 133)[96]

The bodily love experienced by Lorna and Mélanie's mother is the love that celebrates corporeal desire. For Lorna, this sexuality is the presence reaching beyond the traditional understanding of reality, and forming the sense of self which escapes language and emotion. Language and writing, embodying Cixous' theory, are sexual acts in themselves. For Mélanie, writing "becomes her way to capture and understand reality and to discover herself" (Santoro 151).

Language, in terms of its narrative structure, is experimented with in both novels. While *Le Désert mauve* openly experiments with the method of translating the text[97] - the novel has three versions the manuscript, notes and the translated book – the original manuscript, written by Laure Angstelle, is discovered by Maude Laures

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[96] ...Do you think it possible to love around the body? To love without smells, without taste, without tongues seeking their salt on the beloved's skin, without the rustling of hands on thighs, without needing to refine our senses? Do you think you could have loved me without considering my body, if I had been just an image at the back of your eyes, if you had had to leave out my body to choose me?

[97] For feminist theorists the act of translation is significant in multiple ways. For one, in order to include women into the dominant discourse, the historical, political and social texts must be translated to include the feminine element in them – women's experience, gender neutral language and gender sensitivity. Secondly, the act of translation, like the shades of Plato's cave, symbolizes the subjectivity and unreliability of language in the process of conveying "reality".

and translated into *Mauve, L' horizon.* Similarly, *Ragana ir lietus* translates the religious history by offering an alternative story of Mary Magdalene, which is later (albeit not directly) read by Marija Viktorija and known by Viktorija. In this way, the three protagonists translate their experiences in different centuries. In both novels the protagonists doubt the reliability of language and its ability to reconstruct or reflect reality.

The multiple texts in *Le Désert mauve* – the original novel, the notes, and the translation – create the feeling of living texts, which represent, shape and reshape the protagonists' as well as the writers' identities. Mélanie, as well as Lorna or Maude Laures, challenge the very structure of the narrative and language as the medium of translating purely feminine experience into words. Initially, Mélanie mistrusts words as the means of expressing her being or of describing the reality of her momentum. In this novel, language for women is a double-edged sword: it cuts reality and shapes the speaker, or it shapes reality and cuts the speaker:

> C'est tout dire quand je parle de la nuit et du désert car en cela même je traverse la légende immédiate de ma vie à l'horizon. J'ai abusé des étoiles et des écrans de vie, j'ai entamé des routes de sable, j'ai assouvi ma soif et mon instinct comme autant de mots devant l'horizon magique… J'avais quinze ans et je savais designer les personnes et les objets. (Brossard 25)[98]

[98] It's saying it all when I talk about the night and the desert for in doing so I am stepping through the immediate legend of my life on the horizon. I have abused the stars and the screens of life, I have

On the one hand, the words give the speaker an abusive power, for they always already fail to either grasp or to express the complexity of the reality in the desert and, thereby, the shape the speaker and cut reality. Yet, simultaneously, words have a more positive aspect of opening the reality to the reader, as Mélanie opens up an avalanche of being. In a post-structural mode, the narrators and protagonists of *Le Désert mauve* are aware of how language constructs experiential reality and how reality, in turn, constructs language.

Words and speaking are not the only means of communication employed by Brossard in her novel. Silence, echoing women's absense in the discourses of the past, has a looming presense in the novel. Interestingly, the only character who is absolutely silent (in terms of not participating in any dialogue, although his thoughts are narrated) is the mysterious Longman. He is a faceless, abstract character representing fragmented sexuality, death, danger and destruction. However, the women in the novel, despite their closer connection to their physical experience of the world, need to find their place in language which creates reality, and thus, free themselves from silence. As the structure of the novel exemplifies, "the struggle out of silence involves two distinct movements: from experience to expression and then from expression to repetition" (Campbell 141). As discussed above, the first movement is Mélanie's expression of her experience in words, and the second movement is Maude's translation of Mélanie's story. For Maude Laures, the

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opened up roads of sand, I have quenched my thirst and my instinct like so many words in view of the magical horizon... I was fifteen and I knew how to designate people and objects.

translator of the original *Désert mauve*, writing becomes a very tangible corporeal and pleasurable activity:

> Les mots étaient dans la bouche comme de petits noyaux « la partie la plus dure et la plus brillante », une présence, un corps solide qu'il fallait après un certain temps rejeter en avançant la langue comme pour une amorce de grimace, puis d'un souffle, projeter devant soi la partie indivisible. (Brossard 173)[99]

Such a detailed description of the movements of the mouth during speech deconstructs the binary oppositions of body and mind, tangible and intangible. Language projects the invisible words. Immaterial objects of mind – words – are experienced, lived and given birth to by the body. This violation of the mind/body binary manifests what Cixous called the deconstruction of patriarchal boundaries, rules, and regulation. Yet, it is not merely a challenge of logocentric discourse, but an important philosophical shift from a dualistic to a non-dualistic view of corporeal language. The very structure of *Le Désert mauve* demonstrates the attempts to speak the female body, its experiences and sexualities.[100] The different parts of the novel intertwine, echo each other, lack logical organization and develop in waves, similarly to the experiences of woman's body.

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[99] Words were in the mouth like little pits 'the hardest and brightest part,' a presence, a solid body needed to be expelled after a while by bringing the tongue forwards as if preparing to grimace, then in one breath, projecting in front of oneself the indivisible part.

[100] The experimentation with the language is not untypical for Brossard. Indeed, she is most celebrated for the challenging treatment of French gender assumptions: "To combat such notions (and their social ramifications) Nicole Brossard eschews conventional patterns" (New 268).

Feminine language is less pronounced in *Ragana ir lietus*. The choice of the subject – women's sexual experiences – in itself is an important attempt to include the personal within the public sphere. The narrative structure of the novel also violates the traditional logocentric rules – it is cyclical and repetitious, mirroring women's experiences against each other. The unusual sentence structure of the novel, for instance, involves sentences beginning not with a capital letter, having no punctuation, or even spaces between words. Such structure, or lack of it, aims to express the irrational, passionate and illogical nature of feminine narrative. The act of speaking, similar to Mélanie's writing, is meant to discover women's sense of self, but in a more psychoanalytical sense. The psychologist Norma,[101] whom Viktorija sees, urges Viktorija to name her lover as an object, and Paulius is transformed into a giant piano. In her attempts to forget Paulius, Viktorija is encouraged to voice her feelings towards her lover, as an incantation liberating her sense of self. M.V.'s cell mate –Bedante[102] -- is imprisoned because she has translated Mary Magdalene's story. Freeing *her*story from the phallogocentric written word, Bedante remembers the narrative even after her book has been destroyed. Although *Ragana ir lietus* does not exemplify a feminist liberation of corporeal subjectivity in its writing, its structure as well as the subject challenge the phallogocentric discourse.

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[101] As a blunt tribute to father Freud, Norma ("normal") works at the company called Freuda.
[102] Toothless

Conclusion

By way of their bodies, female protagonists in *Le Désert mauve* and *Ragana ir lietus* redefine their subjectivities through their relationships to the perception of female bodies, their sexual experiences, language and their sense of realities. In Brossard's novel, the homo-erotic and auto-erotic sexual subjectivities are suggested through puns and allusions. All these influences form *chora,* which produces "a disembodied femininity as the ground for the production of a (conceptual and social) universe" (Grosz 210). *Chora* encompasses the desert as the space hosting Melanie's corporeal subjectivity, and becomes a symbol of embodied feminine language. Situated in *chora,* the female bodies in *Le Désert mauve* become fluid entities shaped by and shaping corporeal reality. Mélanie's sense of subjectivity freely traverses the domains of language, textuality, and sexuality, in the process of her subjectivity formation. Parodying the pretentious liberations of post-Soviet Lithuanian culture, *Ragana ir lietus* presents displaced, disembodied women who struggle to conjure empowering language which could voice their experiences. For these protagonists, women's perspective, women's voice, and women's description of their bodily experiences are not sufficient in creating an empowered sense of subjectivity. The analysis has demonstrated how the deconstruction of binary paradigms is instrumental in feminine subjectivity formation.

Chapter 4: Subjectivity on sale: women's subjectivity formation in the age of globalization

We who thought that feminism would help us reclaim our stolen humanity now find that we are entering into an era when science, neo-liberalism and globalization seem to be blurring the paths leading to an understanding of our humanity.

Globalization, as defined by rich people like us, is a very nice thing... you are talking about the Internet, you are talking about cell phones, you are talking about computers. This doesn't affect two-thirds of the people of the world.

(Jimmy Carter)[103]

After decades of feminist movements actively transforming women's lives in regions around the world, many women of the last two decades have experienced another challenge on international, national and individual levels: globalization. In some form, globalization could be traced at least as far back to the times of the Roman Empire, if not further.[104] However, as it is more commonly used, and

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[103] Qtd in Yeates, Nicola. *Globalization and Social Policy.* *http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199284979/baldock3e_ch21.pdf*

[104] The Roman Empire includes the period of the Roman Republic (509 BC to 27 AD) and the Roman Empire (the Western Empire, 27 BC to 476 AD and/or from Emperor Constantine in 300 to 1453). 476 AD is when Odoacer defeated Roman emperor Romulus Augustulus. The Byzantine (Later or Eastern Roman) Empire continues until 1453, when Constantinople is invaded by the Ottoman Turks. Including both parts of the Roman empires, it could be argued that there has been a major Roman

correlating with a rise of various technologies,[105] globalization has become an especially significant socio-economic phenomenon in the last fifty to sixty years. Within the last twenty years, correlating with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the spread of a market economy, and the rapid influx of personal communication technologies (the personal computer, the Internet, and the cellular phone), globalization has become an especially significant concept. In addition to the typical stress on multi-national corporations and large-scale transnational exchange, I believe globalization also corresponds with changes in the last two decades spurred by the introduction of computers, laptops, the Internet, cellular phones, and other such communication technology into the everyday lives of people around the world. Such technology is interesting, because it is often highly personal, enables social networking, and allows for the use of alternate or multiple identities – sometimes simultaneously. The following analysis will focus precisely on aspects of globalization as reflected by women's literature from authors in Canada and Lithuania.

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influence that has spanned well over a millennium, evident in the spread of technologies, religion, literature, and culture. Ancient civilizations, such as the Parthian Empire (Iranian Empire from 247 BC to 220 AD) or the Han Dynasty (Chinese Empire from 260 BC to 220 AD) display traits of transnational cultural contact commonly associated with globalization. The same can be said about the Islamic Golden Age (8th Century to the 13th Century) and the Mongol Empire (1206-1405). Despite these broad associations, as a socio-economic phenomenon, globalization can be linked to the rise of the Dutch-East India Company, an early multinational corporation which minimized the risk of an otherwise unstable prospect through the joint ownership of shares. Comparing it to present businesses, in *The East India Company: A History*, Philip Lawson says, "The Company, in fact, represented a force for the globalization of trade and cross-cultural contact before that phraseology became fashionable in our post-modern world" (164)

[105] Mass media technology such as television is significant not only because of it signals an ability for broadcasters and companies to reach millions of viewers across space at one time, but also because television literally alters the domestic space. The most intimate domain of families alters, as does their entertainment and buying habits.

Complicating the traditional public and private divide for men and women,[106] domestic spaces have been transformed by capitalist technologies and communication modes, characterized by ultra-privatization, fragmentation, simultaneity. While these various characteristics can be said to be very recent, in fact, they must have some earlier origin, at least for women, who, beginning in the fifties, in North America, were tempted with technologies that claimed greater household efficiency. Over time, blenders, coffee makers, juice makers, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, microwave ovens, and the like have become normative household fixtures. By the seventies, many women could clean the clothes, vacuum the house, and roast a dinner at the same time, in between going to work and picking up the children from daycare. This product-driven "efficiency" has surged into communication technologies. In Canada, such technologies were introduced over the last fifty years, whereas, by comparison, several normative household products in Canada (such as clothes drying machines and dishwashing machines) are only now just becoming regular fixtures in Lithuanian homes, coinciding with the arrival of various digital communication technologies, wifi Internet access locations, and the like.

Whereas in the past, families had a home telephone, now, each family member may have his or her own cellphone, PDA, or laptop computer. Social utility enterprises, such as Facebook, enable people to network with family and friends

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[106] From Motiejunaite's *Women's Rights: The Public/Private Dichotomy*, in "Frontier Politics," Mary Ann Tétreault says "Public space requires "appearing," another way of saying that this is where individuals put on the "faces" that they intend to show others. Private space at its most fundamental is where a person can be without being seen" (31). However, various communication technologies, especially of the last decade, have made the boundary between public and private more porous.

online, while also enabling a type of social surveillance, where individuals can always be aware of one another in their virtual neighborhood. Even on shared home desktop computers, individual users may have separate passwords, separate e-mail accounts, or individual addresses and pseudonyms for other Internet communication resources, such as Skype. As opposed to Benedict Anderson's imagined community, virtual worlds, like Second Life, provide spaces where people can literally become someone else, by creating an avatar and interacting with others in community imagined online. With the variable Internet identities and the ease of creating additional e-mail identities, the shift of identity in communication is much easier and perhaps much more typical than ever before. Moreover, unlike what is implied by some post-modern theory, these multiple identities are not linear and separate; rather, they are often simultaneous and overlapping. It is not unusual for an individual to be on his/her laptop doing more than one thing (chatting, e-mailing, surfing, and working) simultaneously, while engaging in a meeting with others (with cellphones, Blackberries, and the like) in a coffeeshop, which has music from the radio playing, while a flatscreen television lights up the background. Just as the supposedly "efficient" products for the 1940s/1950s housewife trap her with capitalistic technology, today, those technologies that claim to make the working world more efficient have also helped turn the working woman (and man) into a 24 hour office. We are our own mobile communication centers, with an ambiguous distinction between not only private and public space, but also, between private and public time, as well as amongst private, public, and now, virtual identities.[107]

[107] It can be argued that private, public, and virtual identities are all "virtual" in the sense that they

While these various changes are affecting nations the world over, such identity shifts are compounded in countries such as Lithuania, not simply because all of these changes are more recent, but also because of a lesser degree of cultural and political stability. To compare, the stability of Canada's political and economic system welcomes changes fueled by interpersonal communication technology, whereas technological changes in Lithuania arrive shortly after major systematic and ideological shifts in both politics and economics. When seen in this manner, globalization includes more than simply grand socio-economic interaction of nations.

Nevertheless, the standard sense of globalization also exists and is worth exploring. Admittedly a contentious concept, globalization typically refers "to the complex interactions between the higher interdependence of regional and national economies around the world, the intensification of competition, the spread of global networks, the increased volatility of the labor, capital and product markets, and the pronounced uncertainty in individual, family, social and political life" (Golsch 1). *Stanford Encyclopedia* analyzes globalization by identifying separate concepts characterizing this phenomenon: deterritorialization, interconnectedness, speed and velocity of social activity, its long-term aspect, and its multi-pronged process.[108] Typically, globalization can be situated as either a positive or a negative force, something that enables cross-cultural contact beyond traditional boundaries of nationhood, race, ethnicity and religion, or as something that involves cultural

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involve some type of social performance, however that would be downplaying the importance of the emergence of virtual identities through Internet technology. All may involve some degree of performance, but accountability, as well as social and legal anonymity varies greatly between public/private identity and public/private virtual identity.

[108] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/#2

appropriation and assimilation by more dominant spheres of influence.[109] In another way, globalization, as a contemporary socio-historical concept, can be identified as a simplification of the vast history of cross-cultural exchange and lack of national boundaries. However, such a conception may be somewhat misleading.

Clearly, globalization, as it is generally defined today, associates with the rise of a vast international media network, including, most notably, television and the Internet. Perhaps because mass media allows one to witness cross-cultural communication so directly, globalization has become associated with our present era. Interestingly, because globalization is so closely associated with the last fifty years, there is an implication that cultures are more interconnected today than they were in years past. Certainly, cross-cultural communication is easier and more frequent in the era of mass media technology, than in an earlier era. However, it would be myopic to assume that cross-cultural exchange is a recent phenomenon. To put it bluntly, for colonized people, globalization has been occurring for a long time and with serious consequences. Historically, the spread of global networks was often associated with military conquests and domination.[110] In this way, racist ideology can be seen as a symptom of Imperial globalization. Nationalism itself, which contemporary globalization seems to overcome, may be a symptom of an earlier globalization. The spread of Christianity and Islam also indicate an earlier "globalization" of profound

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[109] In *Globalization or Empire?* (2004) Jan Nederveen Pieterse explores the positive versus negative tensions in contemporary globalization, with particular emphasis on the economic and cultural power of the United States. Highlighting its transnational capitalist charactertistic, in *Globalization and Social Change*, edited by Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt and Jacques Hersh, globalization is treated as a multi-faceted and complex process.

[110] Or, at least, this is how many historical accounts and texts tend to chart the passing of time in various cultures and societies.

cross-cultural communication and ideological change. Going even further back, there is evidence of ancient contact between European and East Asian cultures via the spice route. The transnational system of a decimal numeric system and the interconnectedness of Indo-European languages indicate that globalization is neither recent nor especially new. However, what is new is an open attempt by influential powers to accept the legal rights of all human beings, along with, to a lesser degree, a transnational effort to minimize environmental threats. Several nations around the world make at least a public commitment to both human rights and ecological responsibility.

While such democratically responsible efforts may be new for major world powers, sensitive cross-cultural contact and ecological responsibility is not necessarily new for all people. Lithuanians are one people whose historical empire fostered cross-cultural exchange and partnership, as opposed to those empire-building techniques, such as slavery, genocide, and other marvels of colonization, which, ironically, has helped make today's champions (the United States and Great Britain) of globalization, communication technology, and democratic responsibility, such powerful political and economic forces. Globalization today implies progress brought forth by communication technologies and universal human rights legislation, but other elements may be at work as well. Despite such complicating observations, globalization, as a field of academic study, claims certain characteristics.

First, globalization is characterized by a deterritorial quality. Due to globalization (its values as well as its technological developments), there are increased possibilities for actions and interactions between people situated in

different geographical realities. Territory in its traditional sense of a geographically identifiable location is not the whole social space in which human activity can take place. Second, partly due to its deterritorialization, globalization is intrinsically linked to social interconnectedness across traditional boundaries of location, time, or political beliefs. This allows for geographically distant events and decisions to impact local life. For instance, the increased access to information potentially changes the understanding of minority rights, different cultural values, and increased information access also allows for the global community to be involved in local events. The spatial shifts of deterritorialization and interconnectedness are directly linked to the acceleration of contemporary social activities. The possibility of the relatively fast flow of information, the movement of people, capital and goods, and information facilitates the linking together of and expansion of social activities across borders. It needs to be noted that neither deterritorialization, nor interconnectedness and the increased speed of social activities, represent sudden and modern events in contemporary life. The tendencies that have influenced previous generations became so influential in the 1980s and the 1990s mostly due to intense developments in communication, transportation and information technologies, generating new possibilities for simultaneity and instantaneousness.[111] Lastly, being reflected in various tangents of political, economic, and social lives, the multi-pronged nature of globalization makes it a very difficult concept to analyze or define. That is, globalization as a general concept can be scrutinized and debated further. However,

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[111] Harvey, David (1989), *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell).

as a general framework for literary study, globalization can be said to bear the traits mentioned in the paragraphs above.

Against the backdrop of capitalist globalization, changing conceptions of individuality, culture, and society have complicated the process of subjectivity formation. *Le sujet en procès* is judged against a myriad of concepts, including history, body, language, and gender roles, amongst others. The analysis of Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* and Jurga Ivanauskaitė's novel *Miegančiųjų drugelių tvirtovė* will demonstrate how, under the influence of globalization processes, women's subjectivities are trapped by the patriarchal colonizer – exemplified either through men in the lives of protagonists, or by dominant social and cultural discourses. This colonization of women's subjectivity results in a fragmented sense of subjectivity, along with a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Affected by deterritorialization, the rapid exchange of information, and greater social interconnectedness, the central female characters in the novels analyzed struggle with the tension between a sense of mortality and the search for purposefulness.

Furthermore, the process of female subjectivity formation is impeded by the difficulty to identify (and perhaps possess) a woman's place (space or territory) and duties in the fluctuating identity market, where gender, racial, and national identities are traded. Identity has become a product of sorts, traded, packaged, re-packaged, unloaded, or invested in, even stolen if there is the promise of a good return. Within the new global marketplace of identity, the difficulty to identify a woman's space frequently results in a strong sense of guilt for the protagonists. As an escape, some of

the key female characters in these two novels revert to identifying with nature and appropriating history for *her*story.

Butterflies of the global world

Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė (*The Fortress of Sleeping Butterflies)* is another novel with a complicated plot by Jurga Ivanauskaitė. Commencing with the title, the narrative spins a multifaceted metaphor of a butterfly. As noted by literary critic Gugeviciutė:

> Remiantis drugelio metamorfoze nuo kiaušinėlio iki spalvingo vabzdžio, jau Antikoje įsitvirtino *drugelio kaip sielos atitikmens* simbolis. Krikščioniškoje simbolikoje drugeliui suteikiama dvejopa prasmė – prisikėlimas bei nemirtingumas ir kartu laikinas grožis (tuštybė, beprasmybė). Psichoanalitikai drugelį vadina išsilaisvinimo ir naujos pradžios simboliu. (Gugeviciutė 3) [112]

These themes of metamorphosis, revival, and getting in touch with one's soul are developed through the first person narrative of the protagonist, Monika, who begins her diary at Christmas, in 2005. Monika is married to a wealthy plastic surgeon Linas

[112] According to the metamorphosis of the butterfly from the cocoon to a colorful insect, the butterfly served as a symbol of a soul already in Antiquity. In Christian symbolism, the butterfly has a double meaning – rebirth and immortality, as well as temporary beauty (vanity and meaninglessness). Psychoanalysts consider the butterfly to be a symbol of liberation and new beginning.

(an embodiment of the patriarchal power over women's appearances, as well as capitalist tendencies of profiting from women's bodies), and has a daughter, Violeta, who, true to the transnational trend, is studying in Manchester during the time of the narrative. Monika spends her days registering the signs of the end of the world which she absorbs from international TV programs and the Internet. Monika's life becomes complicated when, on Christmas Eve, the car driven by her husband hits a prostitute who is attempting suicide. While at the hospital, the prostitute eventually does kill herself and this accident puts Monika in touch with Vanga, the woman in charge of the shelter for prostitutes who have returned to Lithuania.

The core social problem developed in the novel is one of the most damaging results of globalization on women, specifically, women from Eastern Europe. The inclusion of the newly independent states into the global market has resulted in human trafficking – mostly the trafficking of women from Eastern European countries into more "developed" Western European countries. While some women consciously choose to work as prostitutes, the majority of women who end up in prostitution have been forced into this field of work. According to the European Institute for Crime Prevention, it is estimated that four to ten thousand women emigrate from Lithuania to work as prostitutes. For a nation of only three million people, the numbers are staggering. According to the European Institute for Crime Prevention, Lithuania has become the most important source for trafficking women into Northern Europe, and Lithuanians currently form the majority of foreign prostitutes in several wealthier, northern European nations. Usually, young girls are attracted by work advertisements in local Lithuanian newspapers, promising a well

paid job in, most frequently, Germany or the UK, and end up in brothels. Upon arrival, their passports are immediately confiscated, thus taking away any possibility of escape; then, the women are forced to work in deplorable conditions.[113] Moreover, the prevailing social attitude towards such women when they are returned to Lithuania is that their predicament is their own fault. Generally, conservative society does not believe in the possibility of change and thus, there is a need for rehabilitation programs and social integration. Due to prevailing transnational social attitudes, the demand for sexual services in Western Europe, and the continuing economic problems (especially in rural areas of Lithuania), the problem of trafficking women continues to grow.

Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė is abundant with gruesome, vivid and morbid stories of prostitutes' destinies in foreign countries. For instance, Vanga's daughter leaves for the UK to become a student; she is forced into providing sexual services, and, eventually, she is killed by her "employers." In order to help other women suffering the same fate, Vanga becomes involved in prostitute rehabilitation and integration services. Vanga convinces Monika to host three prostitutes brought back to Lithuania – Gitana, Kristina and Eglė. Throughout the novel, Monika works to help the three women overcome their painful experiences and re-integrate into society again. Along the way, her own marriage falls apart, and Monika struggles to find meaning in her own life, while facing the disasters of the 21st century. The novel develops alongside the tragic events of the tsunami in Indonesia, earthquakes and the

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[113] *Trafficking in Women and Children in Europe.* The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, Affiliated with the United Nations. No. 18, 2003. 29. http://www.heuni.fi/uploads/to30c6cjxyah1l.pdf

death of Pope John Paul -- all of which Monika treats as the signs of the end of the world.

The Robber Bride, similar to *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė*, refers to realistic global events; in the case of *The Robber Bride*, the events include the fall of the Soviet empire in the 1990s and the war in Iraq. However, these events are not as significant a preoccupation as are the events for Monika. Perhaps fittingly,[114] the Lithuanian Monika is more directly affected by "global" events than her more sheltered Canadian counterparts. In *The Robber Bride,* the story develops around the three friends – Tony, Charis and Roz – dealing with the supposed death and the threatening return of the *femme fatale*, Zenia.[115] The intertwined narratives of the three women account for each of their painful encounters with Zenia, as well as the difficult process of their subjectivity formation amidst the challenges of their changing lives. The three friends differ in terms of their personalities, life choices and attitudes, but they complement each other through their search for stability and meaning of life.

Tony is a war historian teaching at the university. Like other protagonists, she has had a difficult childhood – she was abandoned by her mother and had to live with an alcoholic father. In her encounter with Zenia, Tony loses (and later rebuilds) her

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[114] Lithuania is a less stable nation than Canada, and, compared to the figures in Atwood's *The Robber Bride*, a sense of stability and national socio-economic security is reflected in Monika's generally more intense response to world events.

[115] Interestingly, in Slavic languages "zena" means "woman" (in Czech) and "wife" (in Russian). Thus, it could be argued that Zenia is an allegorical name referring to womankind in general, in this way appropriating the *femme fatale* concept. As in the end of the novel all the three characters –Roz, Tony or Charis – are suspected of killing Zenia (an in this way, themselves becoming the *femme fatale*), Zenia's characterstics (those associated with the *femme fatale)* are shared not only by the characters of the novel, but womankind in general.

relationship with West, her husband. Her sense of subjectivity is escapist, as she (similar to Kristina in Ivanauskaite's novel) tries to avoid the hostilities of her world by using a language which nobody else understands, thereby rejecting its oppressiveness and hurt, and creating a safe space for her difference. As a child, Tony is not only unwanted by her parents, but also does not fit into her society – she speaks strangely, writes with her left hand, and is smaller than other children. Roz is the most financially successful friend of the three. She is the head of a women's magazine, and is engaged in a critical dialogue with the discourse and representation of women's bodies, lives and attitudes. After Zenia's invasion of Roz's life, Roz loses her husband Mitch, who ends up committing suicide. Charis, the third friend, is the one most connected to nature. Formerly known as Karen, Charis was sexually abused by her uncle while her mother was hospitalized. Due to the tragic experiences of her life, Charis, as her allegorical name implies, is a sort of mediator between the supernatural and natural worlds. Charis can see other people's auras, is strongly related to nature and has skills (learnt from her maternal grandmother) for predicting future. Zenia seduces and leads away Charis' boyfriend.

Global bodies

Human empowerment during the 21st century – exemplified by our increased ability to control diseases, the length of life, the ability to travel, shaping our bodies, defining and redefining our looks and our subjectivities – is balanced by the horrific incidents faced by humanity nowadays. Ivanauskaite examines this clash of new

possibilities and old threats in a scene where Monika, after returning home after the accident switches on the TV, while her husband, turns on his Photoshop program to plan one of his surgeries:

> *Fotošopas* paslaugiai pametėjo eilinę baidyklę, vėpsančią su tokia išraiška, tarsi būtų įkaitė, filmuojama ją pagrobusių ir išpirkos reikalaujančių teroristų. Linas žvelgė į moterį kaip į šlapio molio ar lipdyti paslankios mėsos gabalą ir, žongliruodamas strėlytėmis , taškeliais, kursyvinėmis linijomis, puolė koreguoti jos veidą.[116] (Ivanauskaitė 23)

Ivanauskaitė's metaphors reflect the troubling phenomena of the 21st century – a woman's face is compared to a hostage held by terrorists, which is a paradoxical treatment of plastic surgery, at least as contemporary global capitalism spins it. Plastic surgery is supposed to make women free to change their appearances. In a rather typical manner, the male doctor treats women's bodies as objects, as opposed to living beings with a choice. Linas plays God and considers women to be pieces of wet clay (referring to the myth of creation), and his empowerment is juxtaposed to the effects of the environmental disaster in Thailand. When watching people affected by

[116] Complaisant photoshop gave him a usual scarecrow, starting with such an expression, as though she was a hostage being filmed by her kidnappers demanding a ransom. Linas looked at a woman as though she was a piece of wet clay or a piece of meat for remodeling, and playing with little arrows, dots and cursors, he started correcting her face.

disaster, Monika notes how these faces are different from the ones on Linas' computer screen:

> Škausmas – tarsi magnetas geležies drožles – ištraukė į paviršių visas jaučiančios būtybės gymiui įmanomas raukšles... Nenorėjau į tuos veidus žiūrėti, nes jaučiau dygius sąžinės priekaištus, lyg spoksočiau į pačias intymiausias kūno vietas, į pornografiškai išdidintas genitalijas. Tačiau stulbinamas kančios grožis neleido užsimerkti. (Ivanauskaitė 23)[117]

Monika becomes preoccupied with dealing with others' pain and searching for meaning in the various natural disasters, as well as the numerous deaths of many people. Compared to seeing pornographically exaggerated genitalia, witnessing expressions of pain on other people's faces is an embarrassing act of perception for Monika. Yet, she considers that view to be beautiful. In general, Monika has a very strong preoccupation with death. Her first encounter with death is when she is five years old and her father falls off the ladder while fixing a rooftop. Believing that her father was playing a game, Monika playfully stuffs a dead butterfly into her father's mouth and continues to decorate the man's body with candy wrappers, flowers and pebbles. Although she understood what death meant, the game was supposed to

[117] Pain – like the magnet to iron shavings – dragged to the surface all the wrinkles possible for a sensing being... I didn't want to look at those faces, because I felt prickly pangs of conscience, as though I were staring at the most intimate body parts, at pornographically enlarged genitalia. But the stunning beauty of suffering did not allow me to close my eyes.

conquer death and not allow it to announce its victory with a wild scream (Ivanauskaite 41). As pointed out by critic Jurate Baranova in her article „Mirties ir meilės sąsaja Jurgos Ivanauskaitės kūryboje“[118], Monika's preoccupation with death in a way implements Heidegger's passionate urge to give up the factual, self-assured and horrible freedom towards death. Even when flirting with her former boyfriend, Monika contemplates death (Baranova 4). The modern attempts to defy death by changing bodies are juxtaposed to natural violent phenomena, such as the tsunami, inking the imprint of death onto every day life.

A similar violent force, although not part of the world of nature, the "butterfly" of *The Robber Bride* is Zenia. Zenia she shifts her subjectivity and identity by violating the rules of logic, with the goal of satisfing her own needs. While often criticized, to a certain extent Zenia is also admired by her three friends. Roz, the editor of a women's magazine (which traditionally have abundant stories about how to change women's bodies, and attempt to defy time [and, therefore, death] through plastic surgeries) works out and diets. Roz even mocks Zenia for her plastic surgeries. Comparable to Monika juxtaposing the "improved" face on Linas' computer to the faces marked by the pain she sees on the BBC, Roz wonders what happened to Zenia's breast implants during cremation: "those things don't burn when they cremate you either; that's the rumour going around, about artificial boobs. They just melt. The rest of you turns to ashes, but your tits to marshmallow goo; they have to scrape them off the bottom of the furnace" (Atwood 117-118). Interestingly, Roz thinks of a death affected body while having her breakfast. Relishing toast with

[118] "The relation between death and love in Jurga Ivanauskaite's works."

honey, Roz contemplates how Zenia would diet or get a plastic surgery in order to keep a good figure:

> Or else, she'd be going for surgery, more of it. She'd get a nip here, a tuck there; a lid-lift, puffed up lips. That isn't for Roz, she can't stand the thought of someone, some strange man, bending over her with a knife while she's lying in bed conked out cold. (Atwood 118)

Treating Zenia's body as a piece of clothing which can be mended, Roz resents the thought of her own plastic surgery. Her resentment comes not so much from her loving her body the way it is, but from a fear of the doctor's potential mistakes. Overall, because of her problematic familial relationships, Roz has a disrupted relationship with her own body. As a result, her sense of subjectivity undergoes continual censorship from imagined critics – her mother, or her husband. When Roz decides to not punish her body with diets and "incur its resentments, its obscure revenges, its headaches and hunger pains" (Atwood 118), before licking the plate, she looks behind to make sure nobody is watching her.

Roz's appearance has a more significant impact on her sense of subjectivity than the appearance of others. Roz looks at herself in the mirror more frequently and more critically than other characters. Jenijoy La Belle in her *Herself Beheld* observes that "in European culture… a female self as a social, psychological, and literary phenomenon is defined… as a visual image and structured, in part, by continued acts of mirroring." (9). Carefully examining her reflection in the mirror, Roz imagines her

husband, Mitch: "If it weren't for him she could relax, she could be middle aged. But if he were still around, she'd still be trying to please him. The key word is *trying*" (Atwood 82). Thus, the process of Roz' subjectivity formation is affected by not only the dominant tendencies of body changing routines, but also her past experiences, thereby hindering the process of authentic and empowered subjectivity creation.

The politics of death

The significance of political and international events is very important to the protagonists of both novels. Women's subjectivities are partly dependent upon the events which these women find themselves in, as well as the discourses about these events. In her analysis of *The Robber Bride*, Fiona Tolan argues that the novel is "concerned with place and origins…and articulates a peculiarly Canadian view of the postcolonial other" (Tonal 453). The subjectivities of three white women reflect identity changes in Canada and the global society at large: "the boundary between self and other – between colonizer and colonized – is fluid and uncertain" (Tonal 454). At different times of their lives, each of the three characters goes through a process of identification with Zenia – the ultimate other of the novel – followed by rejection, and a resultant feeling of guilt. Zenia invents a different personal history for each of the friends, most of them involving some aspect of international politics. The story of her death is that she was killed as an innocent bystander during a terrorist rampage in Lebanon. Zenia tells Roz about how she was saved by her father during the war. Zenia's subjectivity alters depending upon her need, which not only reflects

the post-modern views of identity formation, but also the discourse about different national and ethnic identities.

Tragic political events, as well as discourses of those events, affect the way the protagonists feel about themselves, and what place they see for themselves in society. A preoccupation with death and tragic events is present not only in *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė*, but also *The Robber Bride*. Due to her interest in military history, *The Robber Bride*'s Tony is also obsessed with differing expressions of death. The very story of the three friends and Zenia begins with Tony choosing a specific historical moment in the past and situating their incident with Zenia within a larger, more global socio-political context:

> An arbitrary choice then, a definite moment: October 23, 1990… The Soviet bloc is crumbling, the old maps are dissolving, the Eastern tribes are on the move again, across the shifting borders. There's trouble in the Gulf, the real estate market is crashing, and a large hole has developed in the ozone layer. The sun moves into Scorpio, Tony has lunch at the Toxique with her two friends Roz and Charis, a slight breeze blows in over Lake Ontario, and Zenia returns from the dead. (Atwood 5)

The description of the chosen historical moment unites the different life interests of the three friends. Tony refers to the description of the political situation: the Soviet block crumbling, and the Eastern European countries shifting borders. The real estate

market refers to Roz's view of the world and her knowledge of the financial world. Finally, the sun moving into Scorpio is a reference to Charis, who sees the significance of the supernatural world for the material world. Paradoxically, the negative image of the sign of Scorpio and the sequence of historical changes ends with an image of rebirth – Zenia returning from the dead.

Tony's formal occupation and her private interest in military history are very troubling to even her colleagues. Typically, a woman working in a field traditionally reserved for men should be seen as an achievement for feminist women. However, Tony is resented equally by the men and my women in her department. Male colleagues think she should not be invading their field of military history, whereas: "Female historians, of whom there are not many, think…she ought to be studying birth; not death…They think she's letting women down" (Atwood 31). This obsession with death is Tony's attempt to understand how war works and why so many people take pleasure in it. While Monika's tracking of natural disasters is meant to help her unearth the contact between the material and religious/spiritual world, for Tony, studying military history is an attempt to understand violent tendencies in people, and to deal with the violence which stains her own past. Tony's sense of self and her sense of security are defined by her knowledge of military techniques and military terms; for instance, she evaluates her house by its defensive qualities.

However, Tony does feminize her object of interest to a certain extent. Similar to Monika, who alters a world map with a black marker, thereby noting the places that have been destroyed or lost, Tony replays the most interesting historical battles in her basement:

> It's a large sand-table… It contains a three-dimensional map of Europe and Mediterranean, made of hardened flour-and-salt paste… Tony has been able to use this map over and over, adding and subtracting canals, removing marshes, altering coastlines, building and unbuilding roads and bridges and towns and cities, diverting rivers as occasion has demanded. (Atwood 125)

Tony creates a space for European history as she sees it. She arranges the map as she wishes, whenever she pictures a certain historical military campaign, thus positioning herself as the dominant power of an artificial Europe. Interestingly, through the ingredients she uses, Tony creates a woman's view of the male dominated field of military history. The space of the map is made from food – flour, salt and different spices: "Tony doesn't use pins or flags… She uses kitchen spices, a different one for each tribe or ethnic grouping." (Atwood 126) The map of war history situated military tradition into the domestic sphere of cooking. In Tony's case, the male dominated sphere (history, maps) intermingles with the female dominated sphere and activities, namely, cooking. Tony, however, does not feel restricted by this kitchen-like space, as Roz does, but instead, Tony integrates the domestic realm into her field of work in order to dominate it. A sense of empowerment comes to Tony from revising the dominating discourses – inventing a language, with words pronounced backwards, or by reenacting traditionally male-dominated battles on a sort of kitchen counter/table. Yet, she does not find solace in the invented language. This language is

"her seam, it's where she's sewn together, it's where she could split apart" (Atwood 27). Tony re-works history, feminizing the violent politics of military history, as well as the language restricting her self-expression. Despite these attempts to create a unified and positive sense of self, Tony's subjectivity is always in danger of splitting apart.

Minority characters in *The Robber Bride* are much more relaxed about their multiple subjectivities. This positioning of representatives of the colonizer and the colonized exposes the artificiality of identity politics, but, unfortunately, results in the feeling of guilt for these white Canadian women:

> Charis can't sort them out: Shanita has more grandmothers than anyone she knows. But sometimes she's part Ojibway, or else part Mayan, and one day she was even part Tibetan. She can be whatever she feels like, because who can tell?
>
> Whereas Charis is stuck with being white. A white rabbit. Being white is getting more and more exhausting. (Atwood 84-85)

The former position of power and agency has become the limited, disempowered position of white women's subjectivity. Charis, grouped together with rude members of society, becomes part of the evil group of people wondering when women like Shanita will leave. Similarly, the newly transfromed body of Zenia shakes Charis up so much that she feels like she is losing her own body: she "closes her eyes, struggling to regain her body" (Atwood 99). Like Tony and Roz, Charis associates

with Zenia and hates her at the same time. Influenced by a stronger sense of post-colonialism and post-modernism, the three protagonists of *The Robber Bride*, and Charis in particular, find themselves in a problematic position. As rightfully pointed out by Tolan, "white, middle-class second-wave feminists were in the seemingly contradictory position of believing themselves colonized by patriarchy, while at the same time, being members of the privileged and colonizing race" (Tolan 460). In the eclectic multicultural city of Toronto, "the contemporary globalized context," (Howells 2002, 204) the three protagonists continually feel out of place and with a sense of guilt.

Monika, in *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė*, experiences a similar sense of guilt, although she lives in a mono-cultural, mono-religious and mono-linguistic society. Her social status, however, positions her amongst the rich. Stereotypically, Monika is the bored, jobless and depressed wife of a well-off man, who usually turns to prostitute services. Eventually, Monika finds out that Linas, her husband, actually did use the services of the elite prostitute, whom he also operated on. When Gitana, one of the prostitutes, runs away from Monika's house, Vanga openly criticizes Monika:

> - Monika, aš puikiai tave suprantu, - ramiai tarė Vanga, - esi ganėtinai viskuo nusivylusi nebejauna moteris, todėl tų mergaičių sąskaita nori suteikt savo gyvenimui prasmę.

> Motina, kurios dukra buvo rasta negyva Londono sąvartyne, turi teisę rėžti į akis tiesą tokioms kaip aš, storaodėms, gyvenime jokio sielvarto nepatyrusioms slunkėms. (Ivanauskaitė 218)[119]

Although she does become angry, Monika internalizes her sense of guilt. She feels guilty for her age: she has not achieved much, and she has not had such tragic experiences in her past like either of the girls she is taking care of or like Vanga. Yet, Monika, unlike other Ivanauskaite's characters, does not give in to either the feeling of guilt or her typical depression. Although she does think about death, and lack of meaning in her world: „jos sąmonė nesutampa su besiverčiančia beprasmybe ir absurdu" (Baranova 4).[120] Monika attempts to fit the different roles of a contemporary woman, yet she fails: she is not a sex goddess to her husband, not a good mother to her daughter, nor is she a good care-taker. She is not able to multi-task; however, her attempts to perform these multiple roles provide her with some sense of meaning or purpose.

Body on sale

The body in the age of globalization has become a peculiar concept. An increased access to information has enabled people, and, specifically, women, with

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[119] "Monika, I understand you perfectly well," – Vanga said calmly, - "you are not a young woman, relatively disappointed with everything, that's why you want to give your life meaning on account of those girls."
The mother whose daughter was found dead in the garbage dump in London, has the right to speak bluntly to the kinds of me, thick-skinned lazy women who have not felt any distress in their life.
[120] Her consciousness did not conform to the opening pointlessness and absurdity.

different means of changing one's body. It would appear that this tendency would have given women more freedom and more control over the subjectivity formation process. Paradoxically, capitalist market tendencies have transformed the woman's body into a commodity that can be sold, bought, and shaped into any form acceptable for society. This violence experienced by women's bodies and their subjectivities is exemplified by the three prostitutes whom Monika is taking care of. The dominant attitudes of society directly blame the victims of rape and, by extension, the ones who try to help them are to be blamed as well. During their stay at the country house, Monika and the three women receive threatening notes from the neighbors, and Monika never tells either her mother or friends about her initiative of helping prostitution victims, because she feels guilty and less sure about herself than the women in *The Robber Bride*. As pointed out by McLeer, prevalent rape myths about the unstoppable sex drive possessed by men, as well as women's dress code and behavior as responsible for provoking rape, leave the victim to be blamed for the rape (McLeer 45). Eglė, one of the prostitutes staying with Monika, has been forced into prostitution by her only boyfriend. Growing up with over-protective, but very educated parents, Eglė yearns for the supposed freedom offered by an apparently well-off and well-behaved young man, Vladas. When, instead of taking her for a promised vacation, Vladas takes her to an abandoned house where Eglė is repeatedly raped and abused by other men in front of the cynical boyfriend, the one thing that wakes her up from the unconscious state of her pain is when Vladas threatens to show the filmed rape to her parents: „Šis grasinimas suveikė lyg nyris į ledinį vandenį...Eglę apėmė siaubas vos pagalvojus, kas bus, kai tėveliai išvys jos klaikųjį

nuopuolį"(Ivanauskaitė 152)[121]. The horrible experiences which Eglė is forced to go through seem to her to be an accident, but as her own fall – her mistake - despite the fact that her parents have strongly encouraged her relationship with Vladas. Losing all sense of place, time and feeling, Eglė perceives her body as the single creation of reality. Body, the most intimate space of each human being is repeatedly being violated, leaving Eglė, as well as other women of her fate with no chance for escape or safe haven.

When women's sense of subjectivity is abused, women most frequently respond by losing or reshaping their memory (consciously or sub-consciously). While Gitana is the most honest and brutal about the memories of her experience – having a daughter after being raped by her father, as well her prostitution career, the other two women's memories are reformed in order to block out the painful history. In her discussion "Memory's Pillar and the Experience of Sexual Trauma," Blaire Kahane defines memory as follows:

> Memory, as most contemporary theorists agree, involves a recurrent process of reconfiguring the past in the light of present needs and desires. Subject to those condensations and displacements, repressions and denials, which shape perception itself, memory is ineluctably contaminated with subjectivity, a changing representation rather than an objective record of experience. (187)

[121] This threat worked like a dive into a freezing water… Panic took over Egle at the very thought of what will happen as soon as her parents see her horrible downfall.

Subjectivity, therefore, although being partly shaped by our experiences and memories, in turn determines which memories are retained, and which are denied expression. When Monika and the three prostitutes are trying to remember funny or positive moments in their lives, as a way of dealing with the past, Egle recounts a funny story of the other prostitutes trying to open a bottle of wine with a high-heel shoe. Yet, when recalling her kidnapping, she notes that the story was "borrowed" from another prostitute: „Mano gyvenime iš vis nebuvo nė vienos linksmos akimirkos"(Ivanauskaitė 157)[122]. Similarly, Kristina, who tries to put her experiences into a film script (full of grammatical and syntactical errors), admits that she has made it all up:

> - Teta, aš viską melavau. Nebuvo nei šeicho rūmų, nei pabėgimo pro Rašytojo namų langą. Atsiprašau...
>
> Krista sustingo spoksodama į vieną tašką, o jos skruostais ritosi ašaros. Ji neraudojo, neinkštė, net nekūkčiojo, tik visiškoje tyloje liejosi pati iš savęs, lyg krantuose netelpanti upė. Kristutės burna buvo pražiota, o lūpos judėjo dėliodamos begarsius nežinomos kalbos, kuria vienintele turbūt įmanoma išsakyti patirtąjį siaubą, žodžius. (Ivanauskaitė 184)[123]

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[122] There hasn't been a single happy moment in my life.

[123] -Auntie, I lied about everything. There was no sheik palace, no escape through the Writer's home window. I am sorry…
Krista froze staring at one spot, and tears rolled down her cheeks. She didn't cry, didn't whine, didn't even sob; only in dead silence she was pouring out of herself like a river outgrowing its own banks during the tide. Kristute's mouth was open, and her lips were moving forming silent words of unknown language, which probably was the only possible way to express the experienced horrow.

Feeling guilty for making up her story, Krista, unlike other prostitutes, does find a way of expressing her feelings of horror – her lips move in silence, unable to formulate the words of a known language. Like Tony, Krista violates the rules of written and spoken language in order to communicate her subjective painful experiences.

The violation of one's body breaks up women's memories, and, in turn, their subjectivities. While attempting to understand the three women's most intimate experiences and the concept of love on Valentine's Day, Monika initiates a discussion about what they think about love. Gitana's love for the father of the boy she babysat in Germany is described as something bigger than herself, like „Pamelos Anderson papai Eglutės stanike" (Ivanauskaitė 192).[124] When asked about her feelings during intercourse with their clients, Gitana notes:

> Jei būdavo visai šakės (pyp), įsivaizduodavau, kad esu tešla (pyp), kurią Dievas perminko... Kai Dievas žmogų perminko (pyp), neturi būti lengva (pyp), ar ne, panos (pyp)? (Ivanauskaitė 194)[125]

A seemingly positive association with baking – an act of creation – does not mean anything positive for Gitana. As she says, it does not have to be easy to be re-kneaded. Gitana silences Monika's references to the "rebirth" by bluntly explaining

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[124] ...Pamela Anderson's boobs in Eglute's bra.

[125] When it was really bad (beep) I used to imagine that I am dough and God is re-kneading it... When God re-kneads the person (beep) , it doesn't have to be pleasant (beep), right, girls (beep)?

how re-kneading when making cookies does not make the dough better: „Tu ją pakankinai, ir tiek"(Ivanauskaitė 194).[126] Gitana's relationship with her body is passively hostile. She considers it to be ugly and does not see anything bad in torturing it "a little." Eglė is much more violent and hateful of her body and its experiences. When talking about intercourse with clients, she says: „Įsivaizduodavau save kaip namą, į kurį įsiveržė kažkas svetimas. Tame name – dvejos durys, ir aš pro slaptą išėjimą pabėgdavau į saugią vietą" (Ivanauskaitė 195).[127] Eglė's subjectivity is fractured, and her soul is expelled by the violent rapes. Then, Eglė escapes into her imaginary version of the women's paradise, which, when painted, appears to be a gruesome place, full of women with dismembered and hurt bodies. Thus, imaginary escapism serves as a means of dealing with painful experiences, and it results in a fragmented sense of these women's subjectivity.

A similar fragmentation of subjectivity is experienced by Charis in *The Robber Bride*. Since her childhood, Charis has been emotionally abused by her own mother, and, later, by an uncle who was supposed to take care of her. Charis is the friend who is related to nature and the metaphysical world most closely. She is constantly both in and out of her body. As a child, Charis is considered to be clumsy because she would not be able to feel the borders of the things and her own body. When she is raped by her uncle, and in her following sexual relationships, even with the man she supposedly loves, Billy, she is unable to stay within her body. She does not even know what her body feels:

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[126] You just tortured it a little, that's it.
[127] I used to imagine myself as a house. There are two doors in the house, and I used to run away to a safe place through the secret exit.

> What had she felt, herself? It's hard to sort out. Maybe if there had been less, less plain old sex – if she had felt less like a trampoline with someone jumping up and down on it – she would have learned to enjoy it more, in time... As it was she merely detached herself, floated her spirit off to one side, filled herself with another essence – *apple, plum* – until he'd finished and it was safe to re-enter her body. (Atwood 303)

Like the other woman, Charis blames herself to a certain extent. It is she who did not feel properly, or engage in sexual relations adequately, rather than her boyfriend's abuse. Like Egle leaving her body to enter the heaven of women, Charis leaves her body filled with another essence, the fruit of nature, and Charis only re-enters her body when it is safe. Sexual experiences, which are supposed to provide independent women with inspiring, individual and empowering feelings, instead, expel them from their bodies. Thus, due to the objectifying and violent relationships with men, these women's sense of subjectivity is fragmented.

Escape to nature

The traditional binary philosophical paradigm equates women with nature, due to their supposedly more biological self. Such correlation to nature, as was explained before, could be empowering, as it does associate women with a strong force. Yet, historically, it was served as a reason for women's limited possibilities for

development, reasoning and public participation abilities. In the two novels, the relationship between the protagonists and nature serves as an escape from the abusive global culture.

Monika's metaphorical connection with nature is very pronounced. In contrast to other facets of her characterization, it could be argued that, in the binary patriarchal tradition, she, as a woman, associates herself and her body with the Earth. Generally, Monika's world does not have such clearly defined boundaries, as evidenced by the type of birth in itself, a meeting point of the natural birth-giving cycle and the scientific procedure of the cesarean section surgery. In general though, boundaries are porous for Monika, evident in how political and historical facts are intertwined with mythical and religious regulations. Fittingly, the butterfly she receives as a New Year's gift becomes an expression of the state of Monika's soul – flying out into a dangerous cold world in search for freedom. Collapsing the private and public divide, her body is marked by the events around the world reported on her favorite news channels:

> Teko daryti Cezario pjūvį. Kai galų gale naujagimis per jėgą buvo išplėštas iš savo slėptuvės, man prasidėjo gyvybei pavojingas šaltkrėtys. Nors po spiralinės nejautros apatinė kūno dalis apmirė, purčiausi taip, kad jei būčiau buvus Žemė, drebėjimo balai būtų nebetilpę į Richterio skalę, o mano nusiaubtame paviršiuje nebelikę nei vieno gyvo padaro, nei medžio, nei įprastinės apybrėžas turinčio

vandens telkinio, nei statinio, nei akmens ant akmens. (Ivanauskaitė 49)[128]

As evidenced by this quote, Monika's post-surgery tremors are associated with the traits of an earthquake, specifically, the discourse of a news report of a natural disaster. This association with TV news highlights Monika's characteristic collapse of the public and private divide, where the ways of communicating two different events (a birth and an earthquake) overlap and intertwine with one another. However, the reference to an earthquake also indicates her identification with nature, and thus upholds the typical association between Mother Nature and mothers, albeit in an unusual manner.

Although the association of woman with nature falls into the stereotypical binary, it is given fresh treatment, or defamiliarized, by Ivanauskaitė. Usually, the female union with nature is clearly inspiring, especially in the case of a woman's body, which has just given birth to a baby girl. However, here the woman's body is compared to a devastated Earth. An earthquake's identification with a spectacular disaster is out of place to the typical discourse of birth-giving as a miracle. The introduction of mother and newborn girl is also not a particularly empowering, uplifting, or fulfilling one. Although she has enough milk, the mother is afraid of her baby, and refuses to breastfeed her. It is also peculiar how Monika imagines her

[128] They had to do a C-section. When the newborn was finally forced out of its hiding place, I got life-threatening fever. Although the lower part of the body was numb after the epidural, I was shaking so hard that if I were Earth, the Earthquake's strength would not fit into Richter scale, and there would not be a single living being on my devastated surface, not even a tree, nor a typically defined water reservoir, nor a building, nor a stone on top of a stone.

breast milk to spray onto the night sky and transform into stars. In spite of such a relatively empowering image and the various references to nature, she fails to relate to the role of a mother, a role conceived as traditional natural for women. By giving birth, Monika does not simply transform into a mother. In other words, while there is natural imagery and an association with nature, being a mother is not presented as absolutely natural.

More importantly, Monika feels guilty. Her sense of self is painfully destroyed: she is a body torn into pieces by a train, and all pieces are screaming to each other about the pain they suffer; she is buried alive, like Gogol;[129] she is a vacuum cleaner bag full of dust, hair and dirt (Ivanauskaitė 51). When discussing mother-daughter relationships, Adrien Rich observes: "mothers and daughters have always exchanged with each other—beyond the verbally transmitted lore of female survival—a knowledge that is subliminal, subversive, preverbal: the knowledge of flowing between two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside the other" (Rich 220). However, Monika does not feel the way Adrien Rich describes and by not feeling that way, by not smoothly flowing into the subjectivity of a mother, and the powerful female-affirming relationship of a mother and daughter, Monika experiences a sense of displacement, disorientation, and thus, guilt. Clearly, Monika cannot fit into the career-centered childless feminist role; yet, Monika does not fit into the traditional subjectivity of non-feminist woman as natural mother; but, neither

[129] There were rumors that the famous Russian writer Nikolai Gogol was burried alive, as during the re-burrial, his body was found turned face down in the coffin.

can she fit into the "subliminal, subversive, preverbal" mother that some feminists, such as Rich, describe.

Monika's sense of subjectivity is only empowering when she finds a contact with nature, and reestablishes a positive relationship with her body. Although most of Ivanauskaite's characters are urbanites, atypically, Monika is very attracted to her natural surroundings. Even while she lives in an apartment in Vilnius, the city space does not play a major role in her life, as it has done, for instance, for Viktorija ir *Ragana ir lietus.* When Monika later moves into her summer house, which is the castle of the dying butterflies, the immediate contact with nature allows her to liberate her forming subjectivity. At a very traditional time of rebirth – the first spring away from her home – instead of experiencing her usual depression, Monika actually transforms her thinking, by planning to attract God into her nets of joy:

> Aplinką krečiantis pavasarinis nerimas šiemet man teikia ramybės ir tikėjimo, kad pasaulis tebeegzistuoja pagal senuosius įprastinius dėsnius, o jo pabaiga nutolsta bent jau per ištiestos rankos atstumą... Net mintys apie mirtį įgauna kitą pavidalą. Jos paaštrėja, bet išgaląsti smaigaliai pavasario šviesoje žaižaruoja vaivorykštiniais pakraštėliais ir laido saulės zuikučius ant tamsių mano būties kambario sienų.[130]
> (Ivanauskaitė 302)

[130] The spring worry shaking up the environment this year provides me with tranquility and faith that the world continues to exist according to the old usual laws; and that the world's end is at least a hands' reach. Even thoughts about death take a different form. They become sharper, but the

Monika observes the plants denying the grain's death. Growing out of the cold earth, the plants transform spring worry and anxiety into tranquility. The thoughts of death do not leave her, as would be usual for the spring, but instead they are associated with sharp and dangerous objects. Their danger, however, is downplayed by a reference to the rainbow-like reflections thrown into Monika's otherwise dark sense of subjectivity. Thus, until a surprising Godly inspiration overcomes Monika, she does not feel fulfilled as a mother.

As mentioned previously, compared to her two friends, Charis is the most spiritual and most inclined towards the natural world. She is the one who decorates her friends' gardens, although not very successfully and with little support. Even though Charis relies on the world of nature – the herbal teas, herbs in her bath, her garden – this world does not provide her with a holistic sense of satisfaction. Due to her past experiences, her body (a sign of the natural world) has become her enemy, even though she does have an accurate understanding of that body's language: "The body may be the home of the soul and the pathway of the spirit, but it is also the perversity, the stubborn resistance, the malign contagion of the material world. Having a body, being in the body, is like being roped to a sick cat" (Atwood 290). She is forever trapped in two personalities. She is the Karen of her childhood, someone who has become bitter, angry and aggressive due to the violence she has experienced. She is also the alternative, spiritual, positive and empowered, Charis.

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sharpened spikes reflect the rainbow colors of the light on and throws sun rabbits onto the dark walls of my self's room.

The woman's subjectivity even unconsciously fluctuates between these two characters. Moreover, Charis continually judges herself as though she is engaging in an act of critical ventriloquism, voicing the criticism of Zenia or her daughter, who at some points become one (not surprising Charis).The time when Charis, like Monika, feels most fulfilled is when she is in touch with nature:

> She loves her garden; she loves kneeling in the dirt, with both hands deep in the ground, rummaging among the roots with the earthworms slipping away from her groping finders, enveloped in the smell of mudpies and slow ferment and thinking about nothing. Helping things grow. She never uses gardening gloves, much to Augusta's despair. (Atwood 75).

Even when experiencing pleasure and feeling in union with nature, and "thinking about nothing," her daughter's concerns over the body's beauty do not disappear. Charis needs to help things grow, trying to help Zenia get through her supposed cancer. Like Monika, Charis regains her sense of peace and is able to construct a more fulfilled sense of subjectivity, when she regains contact with her daughter, Augusta. Probably the single person after the grandmother, Augusta's expressed love for Charis provides her with a sense of unity and purposefulness.

The protagonists of the two novels, although enjoying certain benefits of globalization (such as the increase in information exchange, travel and education), continue to suffer, in varying degrees, from the globalized patriarchal oppression.

Globalization, characterized by an increased belief in and international legal recognition of human rights and other democratic values, has brought more empowerment to women worldwide. Yet, the spread of capitalist values and the continuing objectification of women's bodies have also positioned women in disadvantaged positions lacking the possibilities of empowerment. In the age and culture of globalization, influenced by increased cultural and political awareness, the sense of individual subjectivity has become more closely intertwined with identity. Women's sense of self is influenced by the political rhetoric they are exposed to, the political events they are living amidst, as well as their social status. The protagonists of *The Robber Bride* and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė,* struggle to negotiate a sense of empowered subjectivity, in the process of negotiating their experiences of abuse and their prevalent cultural and social positions. The three friends in Atwood's novel fail to construct a positive, empowered and independent sense of subjectivity due to their traumatizing relationships, and instances of patriarchal oppression. However, this struggle is further complicated by these women's prevalent social position, as they are both colonized women and representatives of the colonizers – they are white, they are rich, and they are more educated than minority and immigrant women. As a result, Roz, Charis and Tony feel alienated in their own bodies, and despite their attempts to find their place in a changing society, they are tormented by the sense of guilt, constructing a sense of fragmented and disempowered self. Only a positive reintegration of their former friend and enemy – Zenia – after her death, allows for the possibility of a peaceful sense of subjectivity. Similarly, the women in *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė,* suffering from capitalist objectifications of women's bodies and

traumatized from forced prostitution, fail to construct their empowered subjectivities. Hating their own bodies, which bear the painful memories, hated by society, which does not provide them with the possibility of re-integration or empowerment, the three prostitutes remain trapped in invented and re-invented subjectivities. Monika, the protagonist of Ivanauskaite's novel, also does not succeed to relate positively to her body, even though she has positive sexual experiences, and is a mother (which serves as an empowering experience for Charis and Roz in *The Robber Bride)*. Only when Monika positively relates to nature and experiences a sort of religious revelation, does she manage to negotiate her fear of death and sense of lack of purpose into a more aware, and yet empowered sense of subjectivity.

Conclusion

As for writing, yes. You *can* do it at home.

(Margaret Atwood)

Focusing on a comparative analysis of contemporary Lithuanian and Canadian women's literature of the 1970s to the 1990s, this thesis is interdisciplinary in nature. Along with a comparative literary analysis, the thesis contextualizes the works within their different linguistic, social, political and historical paradigms, with special attention to introduce English language speakers/readers to contemporary Lithuanian Literature. Noting the influence of Western feminism (drawing heavily on theories of French and North American feminists, such as Irigaray, Cixous, Butler and Kristeva) on the development of international feminism, this thesis posed a question of whether these feminist theories postulated philosophical paradigms empowering women to authentically form their subjectivities. The comparative analysis of Canadian and Lithuanian women's works, situated in their respective historical contexts, demonstrated how feminist paradigms communicated within the powers of democracy and globalization, despite their positive influences on women's status, leave women unable to authentically experience the process of subjectivity formation.

The thesis draws upon Anderson's notion of an imagined national community and situates women's literature as a significant part of the formation of contemporary communities. Specifically, with the goals of democracy to include and integrate the

disadvantaged groups of society, the empowerment and integration of women serves as a measurement of the success of democracy. Thus, an analysis of such differing, yet overlapping, women's literary attempts to exemplify women's subjectivity formation, opened a valuable debate over women's international status. The discussion of Lithuanian women's status is complicated by its post-Soviet history. For Canadian women, as for women in Western Europe and North America, empowerment signified the ability of overcoming the public/private divide and entering the public sphere. In the case of Lithuania, as for most emerging post-Soviet nations, their immediate history was much more complicated. Measured by Western European standards, Soviet women were empowered. Women in the Soviet Union were allowed to have a job (even jobs traditionally considered to be masculine, such as tractor drivers, scientists or pilots), to own property, and were provided governmental support in the area of reproductive rights. Government subsidized daycare, for instance, allowed (or, rather – forced) women to come back to work as early as six months after giving birth. On the one hand, this policy empowered Lithuanian women and allowed them to participate in the public sphere of workforce just as men. On the other hand, Lithuanian women faced a double burden – after a day at work, it was considered a woman's job to care for the family. Moreover, women did not have an alternative. If they chose to stay at home, as opposed to returning to work, their career would come to a dramatic halt, thereby depriving them of the right to a secure retirement. For post-Soviet women, however, striving for empowerment requires more than overcoming the public/private divide in the workforce. Rather, Lithuanian women must struggle against the conservative

Christian notions of femininity, popular objectifying views of women's bodies, the lack of empowering narratives of maternity, as well as the new capitalist appropriations of female sexuality.

For Canadian women, the struggle against similar patriarchal restrictions is complicated by the multicultural nature of the country. White women, discriminated in patriarchy, are, in a way, responsible for the discrimination of minority women. The analysis of these literatures valuably situates the issue of women's literary subjectivity in the international context of untraditionally post-colonial, post-modern and, continually, patriarchal nations of Lithuania and Canada.

The dissertation commenced with a historical survey and critical analysis of relevant subjectivity theories. Differentiating between identity and subjectivity, the notion of *sujet en procès* is introduced. Identity is defined as a more collective term, denoting a person's belonging to a racial, cultural and social group. Identity also entails an element of a conscious and informed choice, and determines the connection between the person and the immediate social environment. Subjectivity is a much more personal notion, which entails one's own understanding of self. Important aspects of subjectivity are a personal point of view and its imaginary nature. When discussing women's literary subjectivities, the elements of agency, control, the authentic (subjective) experience of self formation, and, finally, bodies and material conditions are significant. Thus, within the feminist struggle for empowerment, regarding subjectivity formation, women need to liberate themselves from restrictive patriarchal articulations of women's subjectivity, because they deny women the possibility to authentically control the process of subjectivity formation. Although the

notion of women's subjectivity suggests a unified, coherent and non-fragmented self, some feminist critics (for instance, Irigaray and Cixous) claim that this very notion is not applicable to women, as women's subjectivity is characterized by fluctuations, rhythms and non-binary fragmentations. Moreover, one's subjectivity is interrelated with other factors, such as the representation and perception of one's sexualized body, the body's interrelation with others, and, finally, the relationship between the conjured subjectivity and the linguistic structure within which this subjectivity is articulated.

Classical Greek and Roman philosophers articulated divisive and clearly defined subjectivities. This notion postulates a pre-determined nature of self, which an individual must succumb to. Although this view dates back to ancient times, it can still be found in contemporary cultures. Moreover, the classical view of self is also heavily characterized by the belief in rationality and perfection. Each individual must strive to understand his (women are traditionally excluded from the social hierarchy of subjectivities) role in the social sphere and strive for perfection. Women are left outside this scheme of subjectivity formation, partly because of their supposedly irrational nature and their relationship with nature. Although these theories are not empowering to women, some feminists found empowerment in the Greek pantheon of goddesses.

An even more devastating influence on women's subjectivity theories and women's social status occurred during the later Middle Ages and continued until the twentieth century. Although Cartesian theories position male subjectivity at the top of the social hierarchy, Cartesian theories also had a positive influence on post-modern

subjectivity theories. As the historical survey demonstrated, this theory of subjectivity moved away from a notion of pre-ordained idea of self to the view of subjectivity that can and should be changed and (re)formed with the help of rational thinking. Yet, Descartes' Cogito again leaves women outside the hierarchy they are subject to. As a result, women were considered unable of rational thought and were excluded from the public sphere of life – education, politics, economics and literature. The interconnection of and implicit dialogue between feminist theories of subjectivity and socio-political demands by feminists become more intertwined in the twentieth century, when notions of democratic self-definition become more and more pervasive, as well as more complicated and multiple.

Finally, feminist subjectivity theories are positioned in the context of marginal self theories. Drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois, who articulated the major change in the unified and singular notion of self, the chapter presented the possibility (and sometimes, the necessity) of double consciousness, multiple subjectivities, and multiple points of view. Further, moving into first-wave feminist theory, the thesis critically examines liberal feminist theories and their impact on female subjectivity formation theories. The main criticism of liberal feminism is that it is limited to women in privileged social levels. Worse, liberal feminism embraced the same binary paradigms that for have so long situated women as the less significant part of the hierarchical structures.

Psychoanalytical theories of selfhood, specifically those of Freud and Lacan, as shown by the analysis in this thesis, due to their significance in the field of psychology, have had a detrimental effect on women's status, as well as their

representation in literature. Positioning the feminine principle as the deviant one, Freudian and Lacanian theories present the notion of woman's self that can only be constructed based on her relationship with men. Moreover, woman is presented as an Other (with her inevitable negative connotations), which must be utilized and appropriated by men (as well as metaphorical maleness) in their pursuit of self-knowledge and truth. However, feminist psychoanalytical theorists, such as Kristeva, attempted to (re)introduce[131] the significance of the feminine body, female experience and the mythical notion of the mother, as significant forces influencing the subjectivity formation of human beings, including women. Liberating the metaphorical mother from her position of a negative object and the reason for tension, Kristeva introduces the concept of *chora* which was extensively used in this study. Chora, which is at once a metaphorical concept of maternal experiences and a physical space of the womb, allows the theorist to position the maternal body as a positive force in traditional psychoanalytic theory, thereby collapsing the hierarchical binary structures. Drawing from Kristeva's, Butler's and, lastly, Deleuze's and Guattari's notions of subjectivity, the chapter concludes with the concept of women's subjectivity that emphasizes its experiential, changing, fluctuating and un-definable concept of self that allows women to incorporate their maternal and corporeal experiences into their self.

The theoretical overview was followed by the second chapter, focusing on literary examinations of the significance of the maternal experiences for women's

[131] Studies by such scholars like Marija Gimbutas in her *The Language of the Goddess* and *The Civilization of the Goddess,* have raised hypotheses that the female body, female sexuality and the maternal principle was the initial ruling and organizing principle of different civilizations.

subjectivity formation. Acknowledging the tension which maternal experiences generate for feminist theorists and feminists in general, the analysis of maternal subjectivities demonstrated that in order to construct an empowered sense of self for mothers, women must have a positive means of expressing the corporeal experiences of motherhood, as well as means to acknowledge a spiritual and philosophical significance of these experiences. Summarizing the different views of maternity which were articulated by first and second wave feminists, the chapter draws most heavily on the challenging maternity theories of Kristeva and Irigaray, using them for a comparative analysis of Gabrielle Roy' *La route d'Altamont,* Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women,* and the Lithuanian Vanda Juknaitė's *Šermenys* (*The Wake*) and Ugnė Barauskaitė's *Dešimt* (*Ten*). Like no other feminine experience, the experiences of pregnancy, birth and mothering position women in a contested area between the binaries of public and private, medical and spiritual, and personal and social. This multi-liminal position, both inside and outside the binaries, also complicates the language women can use to describe such experiences. The pregnant woman must negotiate between the prevailing scientific medical discourses (which are typically demeaning for women), their own personal and subjective language, and the philosophical, elevated discourse of spirituality relating to motherhood. The medical and the spiritual discourses offer women a model of subjectivity that is alienated, fragmented and provokes negative feelings in women. In other words, failing to navigate phallogocentric medical, spiritual and philosophical discourses, women conjure a sense of self that does not encompass their authentic experience, and is hated by women themselves. The analysis of women characters in this chapter

demonstrated how the difficulty with phallogocentric discourse, as well as the negative stance of institutional, social, and religious establishments, continues to position women in the struggle for new ways of voicing multifaceted maternal experiences.

Continuing the discussion of the importance of the language in the process of women's subjectivity expression, the third chapter examined feminist language theories, as well as their implementation in women's literature. Agreeing with the post-modern emphasis on the power of language in its role of reality construction and perceiving the political power of language, the chapter studied the experimentations of two influential feminist writers – Jurga Ivanauskaitė and Nicole Brossard – in terms of their writing about the female body. Ivanauskaitė's characters remain trapped in the phallogocentric language, only allowing women to describe the negative aspects of their bodies, and, as a result, their women develop a negative sense of subjectivity, a subjectivity that lacks empowerment and depends upon the objectifying opinion of their male counterparts. Brossard's characters, due to their more critical and more authentic relationship with language, their bodies and other women, experience their subjectivity as freely traversing the domains of language, environment, textuality and corporeality. The analysis in this chapter demonstrated how the deconstruction of binary paradigms is instrumental to feminine subjectivity formation.

The final chapter of the thesis analyzes women characters in the contemporary arena, essentially exposing the patriarchal tendencies of the age of globalization. Complicating Anderson's notion of imagined community, women in the last decades

of the twentieth century found themselves in a virtual community, the community which is highly dependent upon technological advancement. Globalization was defined in the chapter using its main characteristics, such as an increased belief in and international legal recognition of, human rights and other democratic values. It was acknowledged that globalization has brought more empowerment to women worldwide. Yet, it was noted that capitalist values and an ongoing objectification of women's bodies continue to position women in disenfranchised roles, lacking the possibilities of empowerment. In the age and culture of globalization, influenced by increased cultural and political awareness, the sense of individual subjectivity has become more closely intertwined with identity. As the analysis of *The Robber Bride* and *Miegančių drugelių tvirtovė* demonstrated, women's sense of self is influenced and restricted by the political rhetoric they are exposed to, the political events they are living amidst, as well as their immediate social status. Interestingly, the analysis showed that a more traditional (and often rejected by feminist theorists) women's association with the rhythms, symbols and juices of nature enables women to conjure a more authentic and empowered sense of subjectivity.

This analysis set out to compare representative works of two different literatures, which can and should be compared, despite their different social, political, and historical circumstances. Using a common reference point and a similar historical experience, such as women's subjectivity formation, and the post-colonial historical experience, the selected works of most prominent Canadian and Lithuanian women writers has provided unique insight into the international field of feminist studies, specifically, the studies of women's subjectivity formation. The juxtaposition of

diverse feminist critics, and such distinctive (at least at first glance) literatures was aimed specifically at uncovering the themes, characters and developments that would not be perceived if the texts were analyzed in isolation. Moreover, the thesis also expanded the borders of literary analysis in both Canada and Lithuania. Although comparative literature has been a popular field of humanities in Canada, currently, comparative literatures, as well as traditional English studies, analyze English language literatures (differing minorities writing in English). In Lithuania, comparative studies of literature are only developing, while the studies of national literature as unique and independent receive the main focus in literary studies. The analysis attempted to further promote the international spirit of comparative literature, and aligning itself with the comparatist stance such as that of Eva Kushner, who claims that:

> Comparative literature needs to assume forcefully that the universal is already (and has been all along, in often unanalyzed ways) at work in all literatures; that we are right in the middle of the global village, and that not only do all literatures belong…but none of them intrinsically possesses the supreme key to a hierarchy of formal or ideational values entitling them to discriminate in authoritative ways among or within themselves or among cultures. (Kushner 14)

Intentionally leaping through national, temporal and disciplinary borders, this thesis positioned an emerging women's literature of post-Soviet Lithuania in the same line

as an already established Canadian women's literature. Despite its assumptions of universality in Kushner's sense, the thesis acknowledged and discussed the differences of the contexts within which these texts were produced.

Insisting on the need for inclusive, respectful, and changing subjectivity theories, the analysis did not make essentialist use of universal claims about the nature of women's subjectivity, or women's writing. Instead, it traced the limitations and strengths of the feminist theories promising empowerment to women. Exposing the traces of binary paradigms in women's literary texts as well as the texts of a variety of feminist theories, the analysis exposed the ways in which women writers and their female characters continually attempt to explode the boundaries of female subjectivity imposed upon them by the dominant discourses.

This thesis is by no means an exclusive and final comparative study of Lithuanian and Canadian women writers. The study could further benefit from a closer analysis of the social, political and literary contexts in which women's texts were produced. As contemporary texts refer much more frequently to the actual world and real-life events, juxtaposing them against the journalist reports and "objective" accounts of historical changes would provide more insight into women's attempts to establish dialogue with the dominant discourse. Moreover, including a larger scope of women's literature would provide a more fulfilling dialogue, even though imaginary, about women's similarities and the celebration of their difference in the globalized world. In a world of increasingly virtual subjectivities, fictional expressions of womanhood are important artistic explorations of the strains, limits, and possibilities

of female subjectivities, spoken by authors, who are also leading voices of emerging feminist visions of identity.

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